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# THE GATE OF DEATH

A DIARY

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

FELLOW OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

*"But the children began to be sorely weary; and they cried out unto Him that loveth Pilgrims, to make the way more comfortable."*—PILGRIM'S PROGRESS, Part II.

THIRD IMPRESSION (SECOND EDITION)

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## INTRODUCTION

*Perhaps some of those into whose hands this book may fall will be inclined to find fault with it for not being what it does not lay claim to be. It deals with the saddest, darkest, most solemn, most inevitable, most tremendous fact in the world—death; the one event of awful significance for every one, small or great, noble or base, wise or dull, that is born into this strange world. It is not a complete, nor a comprehensive, nor a philosophical treatment of the subject; it is nothing but the record of the sincere and faltering thoughts of one who was suddenly and unexpectedly confronted with death, and who, in the midst of a very ordinary and commonplace life, with no deep reserves of wisdom, faith, or tenderness, had just to interpret it as he best could. There are many people who have no opportunity of looking back upon such experiences at all, whom death has beckoned away before they have had the time to wonder what it meant; and there are others upon whom it has cast such a shadow, that they have not the heart to speak of it; and there are others who perhaps would speak*

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*of it if they could, but who have had no practice in expressing their thoughts in writing. I can only say that it has seemed to me to be of the nature of a duty to speak as plainly and as frankly as possible of my great experience: and these pages are meant not for the inquisitive or the speculative, not for the light-hearted or the indifferent, but for all those who feel the shadow of the supreme event of life cast backwards over their lives, and who are conscious that day by day they are moving, reluctantly perhaps and heavily, but whether they will or no, to meet what no one can avoid and what all must dread—that last adventure that shall divide us from all the familiar things that we hold so dear, from the love and light that we know, even, it may be, from ourselves.*

*In these latter days the investigations of science have told us much more of what has been and what is than our fathers knew; but science tells us nothing of what we shall be, and thus, by reason of its explorations into what can be known, has even heightened the gloom and the terror of the unknown and the unexplored. And thus it seems to us, at this point of time, as though the more we know of God and the designs of God, the less we understand Him; some day indeed it may be that our children, in the light of a fuller knowledge, may look back and*

## INTRODUCTION

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*wonder how we can have borne to live thus, with our uncertain knowledge, our diminished faith; but I would rather believe that God proportions our faith and our courage to our need and to our pain. Such value as these pages may possess will be due to the fact that the writer has tried, as simply and sincerely as he can, to look his experiences steadily in the face, not to disguise his bewilderment, his suffering, and his fear; and, at the same time, not to attempt to explain away, in a faithless and despondent spirit, the hopes, the instincts, the consolations, that went with him to the brink of the dark stream.*

*Sept. 3, 1906.*





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*This book was originally published anonymously, for reasons that will be obvious. The nature of the subject, in the first place, seemed to make it desirable that the book should speak for itself, tell its own story, suggest its own reflections. Then, too, the intimate method of treatment, in the form of an autobiographical record of experience, rendered the attaching of the author's name both inappropriate and inconvenient. For these and other reasons, which need not here be given, I preferred to publish the book anonymously, and I should prefer it to remain so. But as it now seems to be taken for granted that the book is mine, as it is referred to under my name, and as I not infrequently receive letters about it from readers who make no question of the authorship, I think it better frankly to acknowledge the book, and not to try any longer to make a secret of what is no secret at all, like an ostrich hiding his head in the sand!*

ARTHUR G. BENSON.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
Jan. 17, 1909.



# THE GATE OF DEATH

## A DIARY

*June 16.*

THE great doctor has just left me, and the blessed words are still echoing in my ears: "I see no reason whatever why you should not, with a little care, entirely recover your normal health." He tells me that I am perfectly sound, and that my constitution is evidently a very strong one. He adds with a smile that I seem able to take a good deal of knocking about, without being materially the worse for it. I wish I could make a hymn out of my gratitude and thankfulness, could say, in a few sweet, simple words, a tenth of what I feel; as it is, my silent joy goes up to God, like a fragrant incense, from the altar of my heart . . . the God of my joy and gladness. . . . I seem to float to-day upon a sea of happiness, blue sunlit waves about me, open sky above. It seems almost wrong to be so happy as I am, and

yet I have paid a heavy price for it—it was worth paying. My fear of late has been not that I should die—I seem to have lost my fear of that—but that I should linger on for many years in a feeble invalid condition, forbidden to do this and that; forced to rest, to spare myself, to take care, to live by rule, to fret about trifles—an intolerable life. I am to be spared that!

The lyrical impulse of joy dies away. How soon even joy tires me in my feeble state! Now I do not seem to desire to pray, to give thanks, to praise God. I feel as if my soul lay open before Him, and as if He approved, even rejoiced with me; I feel as if I sate, a tired happy child, on a father's knee, my head against his shoulder, safe, loved, comforted, with a peace which nothing could shake. I always felt before, both in trouble and joy, as if something, some intangible fence, kept me from Him; that is all gone now, and to-day He is as near me as myself.

My sister has been in to see me: the doctor has given her exactly the same account. I had a little shade of wonder whether he was not perhaps encouraging me more than my condition justified, but it seems it is not so.

By the end of the year I may be at work again ; till then I must be content to rest and take things easily, and I may hope to improve every day. We did not speak much of the good news, but she understood. What wonderful creatures women are ! My first thought, I fear, was of myself ; but I see that my sister is even happier than I. She thinks only of me—that is a purer joy than mine !

*June 18.*

They allow me to write now, so long as I do not tire myself : it is an intense relief. It has been of late a great trial to one who, like myself, has written so much, and whose life has been mostly spent in sentence-making, to have to abstain from all writing. The thoughts have buzzed in my brain, like wild bees on a casement seeking blunderingly for an exit ; for hours together I have shaped phrases and paragraphs. I am going to try and put down an account of these last months, because I have been through some very strange experiences. Twice I have stepped to the very gate of death, waiting for it to open to me ; then twice I have turned my back upon it, and walked slowly back to life. Each time the experience was so different ; and

all so utterly unlike anything I had ever dreamed of or imagined.

Let me begin from the beginning. I have been looking at my diary of the early weeks of this year. I was working in London till half through January at my literary work. It is a dull record to read: work most of the day, meeting the same people at the club, an occasional dinner-party, a Sunday out of town. On the 20th of January I finished a difficult piece of work, and feeling a little tired, I came down here. This house is a pleasant country vicarage in Sussex. My brother-in-law is the clergyman of the place, which is a very quiet village thirty miles from London. He has been married to my sister for ten years, and they have two children. My sister is my only near relation. I am very fond of the place; the surrounding country is beautiful, full of low wooded ranges. The vicarage stands high, close to the church, and below stretch the remains of an ancient forest. We can see the South Downs, a line of pure green, on the horizon: they are in sight now from my window.

The life here suits my solitary tastes; we see hardly any one. My brother-in-law and my sister are very busy people, for the parish is a scattered

one. I do exactly what I like, and keep my own hours. I spend a good deal of the day in writing, walk or ride alone in the afternoon; in the evening I often read aloud what I have written, and have the advantage of friendly criticism, for we are all fond of literature. It is a perfect life, for we are all of one mind, and appreciate each other. We have a few visitors from time to time, but we are entirely content to be alone. The children are delicious,—simple, and happy,—and it seems to me that I have all the interest and none of the anxiety of a family.

My accident occurred on the 27th of January, and the last entry in the diary was written on the evening of the 26th, late at night. I see that I say that I have quite got over my London tiredness, and am hard at work sketching out a new book; but the strange thing is that though I can remember the journey down here, and the events of the first evening,—the children sat up later than usual in my honour, and I produced some little presents I had brought them—after this my mind is a blank. I see the events of the days that followed, from the 21st to the 26th, written down in black and white, and I have no doubt that they occurred as related; but though



I search my mind from end to end, I can discover not the faintest recollection of them.

*June 19.*

I am told that this is not an uncommon experience; but what a mystery it is! If memory can be thus obliterated, like writing on a slate over which a sponge has been passed, does it not look as though one's mind was more closely entwined than one likes to think with one's body? In sleep there seems a sort of subterranean consciousness. But one's memory does not seem a physical thing. I suppose that the events of those days have left little marks and scratches upon my nature. I suppose that at the end of them I was not quite the same person that I was at the beginning, but I have no consciousness of anything that took place.

One's idea of death is that one slips out of the body, but that one's mind and memory must still be one's own. I have often thought that death, by closing all the avenues of sensation, might leave one for a time insensible to all impressions, in a blind and deaf isolation. I have always believed in the preservation of identity, and I have sometimes wondered whether the reason why the spirits of the dead have no power of communicating with

the spirits of the living may not be that the soul that has suffered death may have to learn its new conditions, just as a child born into the world spends weeks and months in a kind of insensibility to outward impressions. The consciousness is there in an infant ; it is obviously intensely preoccupied with its own sensations ; and indeed I have no doubt that the perceptions of the child are really at its very strongest, because, as we grow older, we find those perceptions becoming gradually dulled. But a child a few months old seems to have no reason and no recollection. I have often wondered what the little mind is doing all that time ; and so I have thought that there may be after death a period when the spirit is similarly learning what its new surroundings are, acquiring perception through new avenues of apprehension, with new ideas gradually dawning upon it.

But if that be so, why do we not become more conscious of the presence of the spirits of the dead, when some time has elapsed after death, and when they have learnt the new perception ? Can it be that their memory has been destroyed with the destruction of the earthly instrument ? It is a terrible thought, that all the sweet and hoarded treasures of the mind, love and hope,

delight and beauty, knowledge and power, should fade like wreaths of mist, leaving the spirit different, no doubt, from what it was before it had lived, but yet with no consciousness of all that it had done and been and thought. And yet this destruction of memory in my own case seems to point that way.

On the morning of the 27th of January, I am told, I went out for a walk about twelve o'clock, after writing some letters. There is a short drive from the front door leading down to the road. Close to the gate stand three fine Scotch firs, up which ivy had been allowed to grow, and the trees had begun to suffer; a month or two before, the ivy stems had been carefully cut through near the roots, and the plants were now dead, the leaves brown and withered. The gardener had set a long ladder up against the first tree, and was stripping off the withered tendrils from the trunk. I stood, I am told, and watched him; and when he had stripped the first tree, and had set the ladder up against the second, I expressed a wish to try my hand at the work. I went up to a height of some twenty feet. He is not quite clear what happened, but he thinks that in reaching round the tree to pick off a twining branch, my foot slipped off the rung of the ladder, and in trying

to recover my hold, I overbalanced and fell prostrate on the ground, upon my back. He says that I uttered a stifled cry, half raised myself, and then, putting my hand to my head, sank back unconscious. I had received a blow on the head which had stunned me, but that was one of the least serious of my injuries. He got help, and I was carried into the vicarage; a doctor was sent for, and I was attended to. My legs were paralysed, and it was feared that I had lacerated the spinal cord. The doctor did not think that I should live through the day, and for a week I was more or less unconscious, hanging between life and death. But of all these events I have not the smallest recollection.

*June 20.*

My return to consciousness is very difficult to recall. There seems to me now to have been a long period, which passed in a kind of fevered twilight; loud booming sounds often sounded in my ears; a face, strangely distorted, would appear close to me and disappear again. Lurid darkness, varied by intolerable flashes of light, brooded over me; once or twice I awoke to consciousness of grinding physical pain, or an excruciating restlessness; I was not conscious of myself, only of pain.

Sometimes I seemed to myself like a diver, struggling upwards through dim waters, but unable to reach the surface. Once I came out quite suddenly on life, as from a dark tunnel, and saw two people, both strange to me, bending over something which they held in their hands close to a bright light. I suppose I made some sound, because they both turned towards me, and the simple movement afflicted me with an overwhelming terror, but the darkness closed in again.

The first real clear fact which I can remember is of waking suddenly, and seeing my sister sitting in what seemed a late afternoon hour by the bed. That puzzled me, and I lay some moments silent, my eyes fixed on her face; she was reading, and looked to me worn and pale. She looked up suddenly, and said, "Do you know me, dear?" It took me a long time to summon up strength to reply, and when my voice came it sounded to me absurdly faint and wasted. "Yes," I said, "of course I know you; but I am not sure that I know who *I* am." When I had said it, it seemed to me inconceivably ludicrous for some reason, and I remember that I laughed in a drowsy way at what appeared to me to be a witty repartee. She rose quickly and came up to me, and I was then seized with an intense desire to be left alone and

undisturbed. I should like to have smiled, and said some word of affection, but I had not the strength to do so ; it did not seem worth while ; nothing seemed worth while, except that it was happiness to be left alone. She stood by me for a little, and then I became aware that she went softly back and sate down, and I heard her sigh to herself, and then the flutter of a page, while I went back with a kind of greedy absorption into a slumber that seemed to fill all my drowsy frame. I do not think I felt any pain at that moment, but I seemed bound hand and foot.

Then after that the glimpses of life seemed more frequent. I became conscious that I was fed at intervals ; it was horrible to be aroused, but I swallowed what was given me in the mere hope that I might be left alone. Sometimes I felt a cold air on my limbs, and sharp pains—I suppose that my hurts were being dressed ; but the pain brought a faintness with it, so that I never remember any long bout of pain. •

Then at last, in some dead hour of the night, I awoke to a fuller consciousness than I had yet enjoyed. I was conscious of a dull aching that seemed to increase every moment. I tried to move, but could not ; then for the first time I became aware that something serious must

have befallen me. I knew where I was, and I realised that some one, a dark figure, was sitting by a shaded lamp: it was the nurse who was attending me, but she was as yet a stranger to me, though she had nursed me for a fortnight. Then I became conscious of a deadly weakness and faintness; my heart fluttered like a wounded bird; and it seemed to me as though my life was only tied to me by a single frail thread, and that anything might snap it. Then for the first time I knew that I was ill, and believed myself to be dying. I could have groaned for pain, but a strange thought kept me silent. I was so sure that I was dying that I felt that, if I betrayed my condition, my brother and sister would be summoned, would stand and kneel beside me, pray over me, touch my hand, kiss my brow. The thought was insupportable.

It had always seemed to me a wanton cruelty to fill the room of a dying person with relations and friends to see him die, when he could not remonstrate or resist; it seemed a hopeless indignity to have the last agonies watched and noted. If the sense of privacy dictates that one should undress, and lie down to sleep, and rise to dress again, alone, it had always seemed to me that when the spirit was about to lay

aside its human vesture for ever, it might at least demand to suffer death in solitude. To perform the last sad act of failing life surrounded by curious gazers: the thought was intolerable! To set the poor body at its feeblest, with the mind weakened by disease, on a stage, as it were, for others to behold its last sobbing breaths, its involuntary cries—this always appeared to me a horrible thing; it did not seem true affection to wish to accompany the last stumbling steps of the trembling frame to the door of death. And so I lay quiet, thankful that death, which I knew was close upon me, should come thus when I was alone. My mind was so strangely set upon that one desire for solitude, that I hardly thought at all of what death meant. All I could do was just to bear the dull pain, just to endure the uncanny fluttering of the heart that warned me that it had hardly strength to do its task. It was not the pain that oppressed me: it was the feeling of utter weakness, of the lapsing of all vital energy, that held me speechless; but soon the fluttering seemed to cease, and my heart began to beat more firmly. Then I suppose I fell asleep, for when I awoke it was day, and I was aware that I was still in the body; but there was no joy about the thought, rather a regret, that I was called back to



life, and that I had not made the last passage that I had always dreaded in that dumb and silent hour.

*June 21.*

I felt that next day, I remember, as a man might feel who has been driven backwards by merciless foes from room to room of a great house, until he is aware that he is come to the last. I was in my last stronghold: everything seemed to have left me—joy, pride, hope, the desire of beauty, the pleasures of the mind, love itself; there was nothing left but just life. If I were adorning a tale, making a creditable narrative, I should perhaps have written that love survived, but it did not: it was not that it was gone, or destroyed; it was merely that I had no time or power to think of anything else, in the world or out of it, but just the remnant of life itself. I was like a man holding on to a rock-ledge, knowing that a fall means death, and instinctively intent on nothing else but clinging as long as he can. It was not that I desired life or feared death: I desired and feared nothing. I merely watched life, as a man might watch an expiring flame, absorbed in the wonder whether it would be extinguished or not.

I remember how once in Switzerland, I had climbed to a grassy place among crags, and sitting there among some rocks, I fell asleep. When I awoke, there was a marmot, which had crept out of its hole a few feet from me, nibbling something which it held in its paws. I lay, I recollect, hardly daring to breathe for fear of disturbing it, wholly intent on watching the pretty, unconscious beast. It was thus that I felt, watching the little life that was left, not knowing that it might not at any instant dart away and disappear. I felt absurdly small and insignificant; I did not expect to live, and only waited to see if I should die; I had no memories of life, and no speculations as to the future. They thought that I was dying too, and that afternoon my brother-in-law, Frank, gave me the Sacrament. I am surprised now to think how indifferent I was to that. I watched his motions, I heard the words he said, I received the elements; but my chief thought then was that the act disturbed me in my watching the frail life, which indeed seemed the only thing left me. The rest of the day passed like a dream.

*June 25.*

In the course of the next few days, I think I struggled back feebly to life; I still thought that I should die, but I ceased to expect it every moment. The first emotion that came back to me was affection; I felt it mostly in the form of compassion for those who were evidently so much distressed at what seemed to me a thing of very little moment. I had a sense of gratitude for the care and tenderness that were centred on me; a certain sorrow that I should give so much trouble. I tried once or twice to put it into words; I even tried to explain that it was not worth while to expend so much feeling over a life that seemed to have been so emptied of all elements that make up life. I still felt the same strange sorrow at moments that I had not died while I was unconscious; I seemed so utterly tired, that I did not even wish to realise that I was dying, and even the sensation of returning life made me feel as a man might feel who struggles wretchedly up a steep rock-face out of the reach of a rising tide. The waves wash his feet; with infinite exertion he struggles a few inches higher, and again the tide reaches him. It did not seem worth the labour of resisting, of

holding on, until one morning I suddenly became aware that the tide had turned, and that I had the will and desire to live; there were times even after that when I sank back again, but the strange sense of powerlessness had gone and I had no longer any doubt that I wished to live. After that my progress seemed rapid; the zest of the mind began to come back; I began to feel a desire to know what was happening in the world; I wished to be read to, though there often came times when I seemed unable to attend to the sense; still the mere words helped me, like a soft music, stirring in me long and vague trains of thought.

Then in the long hours when I was much alone and could not sleep, in the darkened room, with a shaded light burning, with the slow ticking of the clock, memory came to my aid, bringing back the scenes of the past with incredible reality, so that at times it even seemed as if people long dead came near and spoke and smiled.

I was a child again in the old Rectory where I was born and brought up; I could wander through the rooms of the house, looking at the pictures, the books, the furniture; I could see myself at play in the great attic: the very scents of the house, the fragrance of newly made bread,

the scent of the apples ranged in rows on the shelves of the store-room, came to me. I walked along the grass paths of the little garden, in the larch plantation with its tender green leaves, its sharp aromatic smell; I could see the flowers in the borders, the big flies that hummed suddenly in the sunshine, the very bricks of the wall, the gravel of the path. I had not known how indelibly the whole thing was imprinted on my mind.

Then I saw myself a boy at school; I wandered through the big dormitory with its open fireplace, its dusty cubicles; I sate in the old dark school-rooms, with the ink-stained desks carved with hundreds of names; I could see the brightly lighted chapel at evensong, the rows of boys, the flaring lights; I could hear the soft thunder of the organ and the sound of singing. How many forgotten scenes came up before me then! I lived through them again, some of them happy enough and lighthearted, some of them miserable. I felt again the joy of little successes, the pain of little failures. I blamed myself for stupidities, coldnesses, unkindnesses. I felt remorse for the waste of golden hours, for perversities, for indifference. How easy, it seemed now, it might have been to have been strong, courageous, and

strenuous! How purposeless a drifting it all seemed to have been, and what a beautiful thing it might have been made!

Sometimes I lived my college life over again: there had been more happiness there, because there had been more freedom. I remembered with pleasure the free cheerful life, the happy interchange of talk, the keen out-door activities, the pleasant firelit hours, when we were all young and brisk together; but the memory turned with a curious persistence rather to the early days, and renewed with a sense of half-delicious pain the sweet hours that had seemed so ordinary and obvious at the time, and all the love with which I had been surrounded. I could see my father coming into the nursery, strong and cheerful, to take me out for a walk; I could see myself trotting along the lanes with my mother, going to some simple festivity; I could see the great lawn at the Hall, with the tea-table laid under the tall sycamore, with the pleasant group of kindly people, loving life and talk and simple pleasure, with the excited and eager children all about them.

The long happy days of the holiday times spent by the sea or among the hills came back to me. The sea—I could smell the sharp,

briny savours, and hear it hiss along the sand, brimming the rock-pools; from morning to night one used to wander up and down the beach, storing up tiny treasures from the wrack, catching, alas, the pretty tiny sea-beasts, and imprisoning them in stagnant aquariums.

One of the thoughts that saddened me in those silent hours was the thought of the heedless pain one inflicted as a child on the little tender creatures—insects, crabs, butterflies; catching, killing, maiming with no intentional cruelty, but treating them only as pleasant toys, from mere lack of imaginative sympathy. I do not know how children can be taught otherwise. In the old severe story-books, papa pinches Tommy to show him how he hurts the beetle. Tommy does not in the least understand that the beetle is hurt like that, and merely thinks papa unkind. The egotism of the child is so all-absorbing that he cannot put his thoughts outside of himself; he can be made to obey by fear of punishment or displeasure; but he has no sense of justice or equality; he does not see why, when a thing is in his power, he should not use it as he wills. But the thought came to me in those hours, with a fruitless and helpless sadness, of all the pain in the world, that

seems so unnecessary, so untender, so fortuitous, so unevenly and wantonly distributed. Either it is so, or else pain is not the evil that we think it. If only we could feel at the time that we were gaining anything, that the price we paid was heavy, but still worth paying! But pain has no seed of hope in it at the time; it only seems unmanning, weakening, marring; spoiling our happiness, and not giving us anything in return, except perhaps a heightened sense of gladness when it is over, and not always even that: often it gives nothing but a formless and desperate horror, and dread of a world where there is so much that is at once mysterious and terrible.

I was suffering little pain myself in those dark days; sometimes I had days of dull aching, days of great restlessness, of fretful impatience; but of sharp agony I had but little, and I am very thankful for that, because it allowed me to reflect, as I began more and more to do, 'over the strange thing that had so nearly happened to me. If I had experienced much pain, it would have so bewildered and shattered me that I could have only seen the whole through a mist of horror and suffering; but now as I regained strength and came back by slow de-



grees to life, I was able to look the experience steadily and firmly in the face. I do not know that I can give my thoughts at all connectedly; but I am going to try and put down some of the ideas that visited me as I became aware that I had indeed been standing at the very threshold of death. I will trace them as clearly as I can; but the first thing that I will put down is perhaps the greatest thing of all: there is no terror to the dying about death at all. It seems the most simple and natural thing in the world when it comes. I am as afraid, alas, of suffering as ever: I am not afraid of death. When one meditates upon it in life and health it seems an intolerable and humiliating thing; one fancies oneself dragged reluctant and protesting to the open door, and thrust in, as the evil spirits in the *Pilgrim's Progress* forced the man into the door on the hill; but there was no reluctance, no terror, no sense of injustice, no more than one would feel about sleep—one does not resent that temporary suspension of consciousness, but rather welcomes it as a natural and wholesome pleasure; and it is even so with death itself.

*June 28.*

Thinking over the experience of those strange days, what remains with me most strongly is the thought of the emptiness of spirit which fell upon me. My soul was like a fire that is nearly extinguished; the seed of flame was withdrawn alike from the fuel and the ashes, and lay, as it were, smouldering in one single cinder; thought and feeling alike were numbed, and I had not even strength enough to be afraid. I was just conscious of life, hardly even of identity. There remains to me an intense psychological interest about the process, because the slow recovery of normal life taught me this: it showed me, so to speak, the different strata of my own nature, the order in which the different faculties and emotions lay; it taught me which lay deep, and which were shallow and superficial feelings.

I have always held that the motives which actuate people are of two kinds, conventional motives and inner motives. We do many things almost mechanically, because we have been accustomed to do them, because other people do them; not because we have a strong prepossession in favour of them, but because it

saves us the trouble of making decisions and forming purposes. Down below these superficial motives lie the deep inner motives of action, the true vital instinctive impulses of our nature. People are great and small according as they act by the inner motives or by the superficial motives. Ordinary conventional people often act for the whole of their lives on surface motives; people of force and will act in accordance with the deeper and more instinctive motives. The most startling and surprising things in life are the occasions when, in some ordinary and conventional life, the inner nature suddenly asserts itself and rises to the surface. Let me give an instance within my own knowledge.

A very commonplace sensible clergyman of my acquaintance suddenly disappeared from his parish, leaving a wife and children behind him. A few days after he wrote to his bishop, resigning his living; little by little the story came out: he had eloped with the wife of one of his parishioners in a moment of irresistible passion. He had thrown all considerations to the winds; he was a poor man, he had lived the most respectable and virtuous of lives, and this immense force of passion had

thus overwhelmed him. He had simply been unable to resist; he had not thought of his wife and children, of his position, of the scandal his act would cause; he had not even calculated how he was going to live. Some time afterwards I went to see him, at his request. He was living in abject poverty, and told me a sad tale of his repentance and remorse. "I know what I have done," he said, in deep agony of mind; "I know that I have ruined myself and those dear to me; but I must ask you to believe me when I say that I could not have acted otherwise. I lose myself," he went on, "in thinking why this terrible impulse was sent to me. I have sifted my whole life to see what there was in it that deserved this punishment, and I say honestly that I cannot understand. It is useless to say that I ought to have thought of this and that: I did think of everything. I prayed, I suffered agonies; but I felt like a man caught in a current of hopeless strength, where resistance was useless. I tell you I could no more resist than a lamb caught up by an eagle can resist. If God was on my side in my struggles, I can only say that there is something in the world which is stronger than God. My most grievous temptation is to pray, not to God to forgive me, but to that

other dreadful power to sustain me in what I have done."

That is an instance of a man who acts in obedience to some disastrous inner force of temperament. In my own case, the fact of having had, so to speak, to begin life again from the beginning, showed me with a strange certainty of revelation what the inner forces of life really were.

I remember how once some engineers, in a place where I was living, had to sink a great iron receptacle in the ground. The place was a wide river-valley, a plain of alluvial gravel. They dug a pit for the purpose, and when they had reached a certain depth, the springs broke in. It seemed useless to contend against them. Accordingly they brought two strong pumping-engines to the place, and proceeded to attempt to pump the gravel-bed dry. For a week, night and day, a great stream of the purest spring water poured away; at the end of the time they had only reduced the level of the water a foot or two, though thousands of gallons of water had run to waste; and it was then found that all the surface wells in the immediate neighbourhood had been lowered. The gravel bed was of immense extent and full of water; instead of

emptying a single pit they had drained the whole area.

This was what had befallen myself. My life had, so to speak, been drained away at the centre, and the result was that the scattered wells of conventional motive over the whole area of my existence were dried up. I began to realise what was the real deep current of life, what were the ideas and instincts which really sustained me. As the well of life began slowly to fill, the deep, real, vital thoughts came back first. Emotion returned first, then intellectual life, and then, at an infinite distance, came back the social and conventional ways of thought, considerations of money, position, ambition, and influence, which I had thought had played a larger part in my spirit, though I found now that they had only taken up a larger share of my attention.

I will try and trace this process more in detail: it is necessary to be perfectly frank in such a matter. Let it then be understood that as my thoughts returned to me, like hovering birds to an empty dovecot, I learnt, to my great surprise, and I will say humiliation, which of these thoughts were the most loyal and faithful, which represented the innermost side of my character

and temperament. I learnt indeed the composition, to use a chemical phrase, of this complex essence which I knew as myself.

*June 29.*

When I look back at my experience of thus being confronted with death, and ask myself what, in that dark hour, were the memories that I treasured, I have little difficulty in answering.

I cared not at all for my personal successes; not at all about the little position I had achieved; not at all about having laboured steadily and conscientiously—all those things seemed unreal and immaterial. I did not even care to think that I had, however fitfully and feebly, tried to serve the will of God, tried to discern it, tried to follow it. In that hour was revealed to me that I could not have done otherwise, that all my life, success and failure alike, had been but a minute expression of that supreme will and thought. What I did care about was the thought that I had made a few happier, that I had done a few kindnesses, that I had won some love. I was glad that there had been occasions when I had conquered natural irritability and selfish anxiety, had said a kind

and an affectionate thing. Rectitude and prudence, they seemed to matter nothing; what oppressed me was the thought that I might have been readier to do little deeds of affection, to have been more unselfish, more considerate.

Small incidents, long forgotten or forgiven, I doubt not, by those who were dear to me, came back to me with a throb of sorrow. I remembered, for instance, how my sister, one morning not so long before, had got out for me a number of papers on which she wanted my opinion. I was hard pressed with work, and when I was summoned at the time I had named, I said that I could not attend to the matter. She had put the papers away again, smiling, and saying that another time would do just as well; and I went back to my work. Such little things as that, and there were many such, came back to me then. It may be thought that these were unimportant things enough. I do not know; I can only say that they seemed to me to have been the things which mattered.

What I did desire with all my heart was that I should be loved, remembered, regretted, that I should leave behind, at least in a few hearts, a sweet and fragrant memory; and what I did bitterly regret was that my absorption in my



work and in myself had left me so little at leisure to make the lives of others sweeter and happier. If life were given back to me, I felt how different I would be. It has been given back; and I am not, alas! as different as I hoped.

*July 2, 3, and 4.*

I have always been a convinced Christian; I was brought up in simple orthodox ways, and as a boy took Christianity for granted as an absolute and unquestioned fact; I accepted the doctrines of Christianity much as I accepted the laws of nature. For instance, when, as a boy, I was taught science and mathematics, I became aware that, through the created scheme of things, there ran laws of great mystery and complexity, the laws of electricity, of light, of heat; as I learnt more I became aware that, though in minute particulars my own limited experience confirmed these laws, yet there were many laws of which I did not understand the working, and again probably other laws the very existence of which was unknown to me. The statements of Christian doctrine, such as the doctrine of 'the Trinity, the consubstantial nature of the Son, the procession of the Holy

Spirit, appeared to me to be laws of this kind, the truth of which I did not doubt, although my own actual experience did not in any way confirm them.

At the University I went through a period of religious speculation, which made me aware that much of the fabric of Christian doctrine was probably only a human attempt to state in philosophical or metaphysical terms truths which were derived from hints and suggestions made by Christ Himself and the sacred writers of Scripture. These doctrines I began to see were scientifically unverifiable, and appeared to me to be the result of a human desire to be definite and precise; an attempt, that is, to treat in a scientific way statements which were perhaps not intended to be precise. But I did not go further than this, and I was content to feel that Scripture made no attempt to state doctrine in direct terms, but that the work of the theologian was to deduce principles and truths out of statements made rather with a psychological than with a philosophical motive. I tended then to leave the dogmatic side of Christianity alone, and to confine myself more to the spiritual and mystical apprehension of it.

I never had the slightest difficulty in believing

in God. There indeed my experience confirmed at every point the statements of theologians. Next to my own identity there seemed nothing in the world so certain as the fact that there was outside of me a vast creative Will that had made all things, and had laid down laws by which all things were guided. Of course there was much that was mysterious even then. If God was, as theologians taught, so entirely and whole-heartedly on the side of what was good and pure and happy, it seemed a question of intolerable difficulty as to where and how evil and suffering had contrived to be intruded into the scheme; if not originated, it must at least have been permitted. Evil, it seemed to me, must have been anterior to any choice exercised by man; I did not see how he could choose evil rather than good, unless the evil was there already.

Then, too, the comprehension of Evolution as an undisputed principle showed me that man had probably not fallen from a state of innocence, but was struggling upwards from a lower and more bestial condition. Evil in its grossest forms, such as lust and cruelty, had existed for thousands of centuries in the animal world, before the arrival of man upon

the scene. I was disposed to believe that it became sin as soon as man had risen high enough to be conscious of the power of volition and choice; but even that left unexplained the existence of so gigantic a tradition of pain and suffering in the world. The tendency of animals to prey on each other, the ravages of disease, had existed for hundreds of ages before man appeared upon the scene; and the supreme difficulty lay in the attempt to conceive of an omnipotent and benevolent God, Who created so many sentient beings with an instinct for happiness and life, and then allowed so large a possibility of suffering and death to be intermingled with His design.

Still, when I came to the establishment of Christianity, I felt on surer ground. I realised that in the person of Christ, even subtracting from the records the possibilities of error and exaggeration, there appeared a figure intensely human, and yet with a perception of inner and spiritual truth which seemed quite out of the range of humanity.

The miraculous element of the Gospels troubled me little, though I had rather it had not been there, for it seemed, to me that if one accepted the miraculous element

without question, one was in the position of believing that God had allowed Himself at a point of time and in an arbitrary manner to set aside His own universal laws; and thus, though I was not in a position to deny the possibility of miraculous occurrences having attended the life of Christ, yet I was disposed to hope that in an age when a belief in miraculous occurrences was universal, the probability was that a supernatural colour was easily given to occurrences which were not necessarily supernatural.

The unsatisfactory part of the case for miracles must always be that there is no miracle which is attested by absolutely irrefragable evidence; and that if it had been a part of the design of God, working in Christ, to attest the truth of the Christian revelation by miracles, it would have been easy to have done some miraculous deed, or a series of miraculous deeds, which would have taken their place, without any doubt, as historical occurrences which no reasonable man could henceforth doubt. But with the miracles of the Gospel this is not the case. The records are the records of very simple-minded people, who were not disposed to find any particular difficulty in the possibility of miraculous occurrences; and moreover there is no converging

historical testimony in their favour. They must, indeed, from the historical point of view, be relegated to the class of statements for which the evidence is not complete or convincing.

But the personality of Christ stands out above all, like a peak among low ridges, as a personality which the reporters of His deeds and words were utterly incapable of conceiving or inventing; and His teaching seemed to me, when I endeavoured to approach it in an entirely unbiassed spirit, to be teaching not of the world but above the world.

And then, too, the belief in the Spirit of God seemed to be confirmed by my own experience; there was undoubtedly a holy influence abroad in the world, working secretly and surely in the hearts of men, turning them from all that was mean and vile and hateful, and bidding them hold to whatever was pure and noble, visiting them indeed when they erred against light with an unmistakable sense of failure and shame.

Thus on the spiritual side the apprehension of Christian truth seemed to me to be a reasonable and vital process. I confess that I drew more and more away from ecclesiastical traditions and organisations, into a region of individual

faith. Every one, it seemed to me, must approach the central truth from his own point of view; and I saw increasingly in ecclesiastical ordinances and theological dogma an attempt to impose the theories of hard, precise, and unspiritual minds upon men; I began to see that ecclesiasticism was one of the most dangerous enemies of that liberty of thought which I seemed to discern to have been Christ's ideal. Thus the whole of the Calvinistic theory of the scheme of salvation, the satisfaction of outraged justice by the substitution of a pure victim, came to be a merely incredible doctrine; and the sufferings of Christ appeared to me to be only the truth that He submitted Himself, for the sake of common humanity, to the fiercest and most horrible assaults of suffering and shame upon the mortal nature, so that all men might feel that, however dark a road they had to tread, His own path was marked by blood-stained footprints before them; and yet that He had never for a moment lost His perfect courage, His all-embracing love.

✓ I see now that though I had tried, so far as I could, to simplify and vitalise my religion, yet there had lain about me a whole network of instinctive traditions and inherited

beliefs. I had not been simple enough. I had been misled by my education, my temperament, my beliefs, into thinking that religion was still a complicated and difficult matter; that there were problems that I must try to solve, difficulties that I must make some attempt to harmonise. I had often striven to address my prayers to the Saviour, to remind myself of His humanity, to plead His sufferings. I had forced myself into the belief that evil and suffering were no part of God's design; that they grew out of His gift to us of free-will; that it was to Christ rather than to the Father of all, that I must, in virtue of His stainless humanity, appeal.

Now, as I disengaged myself from the terrible state of feeling which I have described, when I seemed to be clinging to mere life, like a sailor shipwrecked in a ravenous sea; as soon as that intense and absorbing preoccupation, that seemed to afford me no time or occasion for any other thought, left me, two emotions came back to me; the first, of which I will speak later, was an intense and tender consciousness of the love of those I held most dear, a deep gratitude for the emotion which my affliction seemed to evoke; and with that came a wide love for the



whole beautiful world, for the little race of men, faring on so patiently to the unknown goal; and then, next to that, came back an intense sense of God and His fatherly nearness to me, that swallowed up all other thoughts, and on the surface of which all my old religious beliefs and opinions seemed to drift like broken seawrack upon a wide ocean. I seemed, with all other created things, to lie in the hollow of His hand. Even though I wondered in a dim way why we should be so sadly afflicted, why we should have to suffer and die, I could not doubt the infinite width and depth of His love: He seemed to have leisure, even in the midst of His immense business with all the revolving stars of heaven, bearing millions of living races, the very form and fashion of which were unknown to me, leisure to look down upon me, His frail and suffering child, with perfect understanding and perfect love. I was secure, I was safe; the worst that could happen to me, however much I dreaded it and agonised under it, was all a part of His vast Will; in those hours nothing came between me and my God; the history of man, the sacred revelations, the myriad laws of the universe rolled away like a mist, and left me, a single sentient point in the Almighty heart.

I felt that nothing, no human conception however august, no law however ancient, no tradition however jealously taught, could ever again sweep in between me and that awful presence. I had neither fear nor regret. As for the countless failures and sins of my life, my frail desires, my timid hopes, my mean passions, they were all in His heart; I had no need to think of them, to confess them, to repent of them; they were God's concern, and mine no longer.

I knew that if I came back to life the same web would be woven again: I should have anxious decisions to make, I should be beset by fears and cares, I should be weary often, happy often; but I should live, I hoped, in a different spirit, trustful, hopeful, loving. I felt that it mattered nothing to God what I knew, what I believed, what abstract propositions I had mastered, what my place, my influence, might be; all that mattered was that I should turn to Him at every moment with perfect confidence and trust. I felt that the poor body with which I was burdened, with all its low desires for ease and comfort, was but a vesture that wrapped a heavenly spirit; that if I laid it aside in corruption, I should be closer to His heart. That body, were I given back to life, would be clamorous and ailing often; it

would no doubt again seem to distract me from Him, to push between me and the sun. But even that would be a part of His will, and I could bear even that, once satisfied as I had been with His likeness. I thought that I should never despise holy influences and ordinances that might serve to remind me of God; but that I would test them in the future not by their traditional values, but by the test whether they indeed did bring me closer to the Father: Whom I would worship in spirit and in truth, and not according to the rites of men.

I dare not say that since I have returned to life and health I have not forfeited something of that tremendous intuition, that divine liberty. Alas! what others expect of one, one's desire not to disappoint or hurt those whom one loves, and who hold such traditions dear, are sad motives to keep silence. But it is in this spirit that I think of things that are sacred to others, even though they are not immediately sacred to myself: that submission to them is indeed a sacrifice to love; and that love is a truer and purer principle to follow even than truth itself.

But since that day I can say that for myself truth and love are so inextricably intertwined that I can see little difference between them; and

in dealing with these things, I desire to hold rather to the larger principle of loving-kindness and simplicity, than to satisfy my taste for logical definition. God and the soul! those are the two things which after all are true.

*July 7 and 8.*

It was in the middle of all this that I suffered a second blow. I was struggling back into a sort of broken life; I had been warned to be careful, to commit no kind of imprudence; but one hot day in the spring I imprudently exposed myself to a draught, and took a chill. In my enfeebled state, this turned to a slight inflammation of the lungs; it would not have been serious if I had been stronger. The fever was never high, and soon abated. I had a few days and nights of restless misery, accompanied with a certain amount of pain, but the attack passed off.

One morning, however, I was sitting up in bed, making some pretence to read, when I was suddenly seized with a desperate faintness. The nurse was with me, and the doctor was summoned in haste. I was fully conscious, and moreover fully aware that I was in imminent danger. I could see that my looks alarmed those about me; it was a heart failure. I experienced nothing

but a distressing breathlessness, and at intervals the sense of deadly faintness. I believe that I was kept alive by inhaling oxygen, and by hypodermic injections of strychnine; I was made to lie perfectly flat, and warned not to move hand nor foot. This time I had no doubt whatever from my own sensations that I was going to die; but this time, too, my mind was absolutely unclouded. Again, I thankfully say, I felt no fear; what went on in my mind was not in that region at all. I did not speculate as to what was before me, but with a curious matter-of-factness I surveyed the material consequences of my death. I thought of the suspension of my work, of the distribution of my little worldly goods. I should have liked to express some wishes as to the latter, but felt unequal to the physical effort. In fact, I thought of myself exactly as I might have thought of any one else, but without tenderness or self-pity. There was no sense of regret, no feeling of repentance. I neither wished that anything had been otherwise, nor did I hope for life, though I certainly desired to live, and was anxious to do anything that I could to assist the ministrations of nurse and doctor; but here again with the same spectatorial view, as though I were assisting at the death-bed of another.

Sometimes I slept, sometimes I woke, and always returned to a perfect consciousness of my position. Very gradually I became aware that I was coming back to life, but still without any sense of pleasure or gratitude, yet with a sort of detached and pathological interest in my own symptoms.

Not till the third day, after a long sleep, did I become fully aware that again I had stood at the very gate of death, and again returned. Then I became aware of an intense craving for life. The thought came to me, in all its intensity, that the quality of any suffering, however acute, is deeply affected by the thought that one will still open one's eyes upon the world. A man who is to undergo a dangerous operation, and is aware of its danger, has still the hope that he will return in consciousness to the familiar scene, but with the imminent prospect of death before one's eyes, one is brought face to face with the ultimate fact that all the familiar thoughts and activities are at an end; there is no hope of any resumption of customary things, and no appeal possible. The well-known books, the rooms, the scenes one knows and loves, the dear faces, one has done with them all; and instead one has to face the prospect, perhaps of annihilation, perhaps of a sleep, perhaps of a

new existence to be lived under wholly inconceivable conditions. What really appals the mind, what came upon me with a force that I had never contemplated, was the terrible loneliness and isolation of it all. Here, in this world, one can always resort, however much alone one is, to familiar books and thoughts; one can turn to nature; one can call another human being to one's assistance; but the thought came home to me in those hours how little fit one is for loneliness, and how little of one's thought is given to anything but the well-known material surroundings of the world in which we move. From dawn to night one lives in these customary things, one is wholly occupied in them; even at night one trafficks in dreams with the same wares, re-arranging memory and reminiscence to suit one's fantastic taste. I felt how slender and faint one's spiritual life was; how dreamful and vague one's speculations were; how wholly imaginary and inconclusive. Was it possible, I wondered, was it advisable, to live more in the things of the spirit? It seemed to me that it was not possible, not advisable; if the region of the spirit were a definite one, full of unquestioned facts and definite laws; if one arrived by speculation any nearer to one's conception of God

and of the soul, if man after man succeeded in making discoveries about the life of the spirit which could not be gainsaid, it would be different; but each mystical and spiritual nature treads a lonely path; the discoveries, the certainties of one are not confirmed by, nay, are frequently at variance with the discoveries and certainties of another. In mystical reveries we are merely building an imagined house of our own in the gloom. The prophet of old saw the celestial city as a square fortress crowning a crag, with gemlike foundations and gates of pearly hue: but can we be assured for a moment that any such place existed out of his beautiful imagination? Is it not rather clear that the dreaming mind was but painting its own fancies upon the void?

What I rather became aware of as I receded gradually, climbing back into life, from that dark gate, was the awful and profound mystery of it all. I became aware that we were meant, after all, to live the life of the world to the uttermost, in the familiar scenes, among the well-known faces. There was a light that we might follow; a faint light indeed, but which seemed to guide us to truth, purity, and kindness rather than to untruth, uncleanness, and selfishness. But how faint a light it was, and



how our efforts to reach it were hampered by limitations of temperament, which were not wholly self-imposed!

Blank and terrible as the mystery of death was, it was certainly there; and into that formless gloom, with the mind fading, the consciousness dying away, we were to step. My nearness to death revealed to me indeed nothing of what was to be; rather it revealed to me that we must live to the uttermost among the things that were given to us to use. It rebuked with a solemn sternness all querulousness, all anxiety. It told me that I was in stronger hands than my own; it reminded me that it was sweet to live; but it gave me no hint that might sustain or console about what should lie beyond.

*July 10.*

There was one very strange night that I spent; not wholly terrible, but overhung with a solemn awe. I seemed to wander in dark groves, by glimmering paths. There appeared to be no undergrowth, for I could see the smooth boles of the trees shining faintly within the wood on either hand; above was an impenetrable darkness of leafage. Sometimes a breeze would sigh for a moment upon the foliage above—sigh, and

pass on; but below, where I was, no breath moved. Sometimes the wood ended for a space, and I could see to right and left of me a dim landscape, with a brightness far down on the horizon, like the herald of a misty moon. The air above seemed cloudless, and of a deep blue or green; but it was night always, and over the tree-tops I could now and then see a pale star hung in the gloom. Sometimes I could see the wan light of some gleaming pool or lake, shut in by trees, unstirred by any breath of wind. In places the land seemed more open, and I could discern faint ranges of hills, whether near or far I could not guess. Once, in the very heart of the wood, I came upon a huge building standing silent. The uncertain light showed me rows of dark windows, vast portals, great cornices; round about I could faintly discern gardens and terraces, but whether the place was deserted or merely wrapped in sleep I could not tell. No chink of light shone in any of the cavernous windows; a tall tower rose high above the roofs, lit up with the faint radiance from the horizon. I was oppressed with a sense not of terror, but of complete loneliness. I had no sense of fatigue, for the air was fresh though still; but an intense craving grew upon me

for something that might break the oppressive gloom, for the rising of the luminary that seemed to be but just below the horizon, yet still to delay its coming. There seemed to be no living thing near me in that impenetrable wood. Once I came to a bridge, under which flowed silently a brimming river; to left and right I could see it glimmer among the trees. The sight of the bridge gave me a hope that I might find some habitation, where I could ask for shelter, or at least learn something of the strange country where I found myself; but the track, which was all grass-grown, and bore no signs of wheel or foot, plunged again into the forest, and it appeared as though I had no choice but to go forward. At last, and for the first time, I seemed to become aware of some living thing in the forest besides myself. I did not know what it was, nor how the sense of a presence was communicated to me, but it was as though something, I knew not what, were drawing near in the darkness of the wood, as though it were approaching upon a track which would at last converge upon my own. At last my path brought me out into an open space in the wood, where several roads seemed to meet. In the centre of the space stood a tall stone pillar,

like a gate-post with a heavy top, inclining slightly to one side, emerging from bushes that grew round its foot. Here I halted for a moment, and then walked slowly round the space, peering down each of the shadowy avenues that led out of the clearing. Up one of them came a slow troop of veiled forms; in the midst, borne shoulder-high, and covered with a black pall, was a motionless figure. I could see under the pall, outlined by its velvet folds, the head, the body, and the stiffened feet. The procession passed close by me; I dared not interrupt the solemn pomp, though I stood clear of the wood, hoping that I might receive a word or sign. But the figures went slowly past, their eyes bent upon the ground, apparently unconscious of my presence; then with a sudden flash of perception I realised that it was my own dead form that was being borne past, and that I was myself a spirit. That thought gave me little concern,—my one desire was to make my presence known; but when the dark procession passed me by in silence, and entered with slow and measured steps another of the dark avenues, while I stood there unnoticed and unheeded, then a deep tide of sadness flowed in upon my spirit, and I knew that I was dead indeed.

*July 12 and 13.*

Ever since my double experience of the proximity of death I have been trying, as sincerely as I can, to ascertain what I really do believe about a future existence; not what I hope, or think, or imagine, but what I believe. But as half the confusion of thought with which arguments are generally conducted arises from the fact that the disputants attach different meanings to words, I think I had better define what I mean by "believe." I do not mean "know." Knowledge is the state of mind which results from having all the data; while belief is the state of mind which results from having a certain number of data, enough to form a theory as to what the missing data are, though without any absolute certainty. To take a simple illustration. If I am on a straight road, which runs up to a low height in front of me, and disappears; and if at the same time I see a road running up a higher range behind, which appears to be the continuation of the road which I am treading, I believe, and am justified in acting upon the belief, that it is the same road as that which I am upon, although the intervening section of it is hidden from my eyes. If I miss an overcoat from my hall, and

the following day meet a friend who has been dining with me a day or two before, wearing an overcoat of the same pattern and make as my missing garment, my belief that it is mine justifies me in asking him whether he has not taken mine by mistake, though it is not impossible that he may have one of the same character. This is what is called circumstantial evidence, and, if it is strong enough, it justifies one's acting upon it as a practical certainty, even though one deduces certain of the data from the data which one possesses. Belief, then, in my mind, is the species of certainty which results from having some amount of evidence, all of which is consistent with the theory which I consider that I am justified in believing.

Suppose that I have a strong intuition of the truth of a thing which I very much desire to believe, I tend to believe it, if I have only a very little evidence to justify me in believing it. If a man, for instance, is very much in love, he is apt to believe that his feeling is reciprocated by the object of his affections, upon slight indications which, if he were not in love, he would never think of accepting as evidence for the existence of a passionate attraction towards himself in another.

Now I admit that the whole human race has a deep-seated and instinctive intuition of the continuance of identity after death. The question is whether there is anything that can be called scientific evidence in favour of that belief. The intuition may simply be the result of a failure of imagination, because as one's own existence is almost the only thing of which one is absolutely certain, it requires a very strong effort of the imagination, an effort quite outside the power of an ordinary mind, to conceive of oneself as non-existent. Next to one's own existence, we are as certain as we can be of anything, of the existence of the solid earth on which we move, and the effort of imagination required to conceive of matter as non-existent is an almost impossible one. We can conceive of it as invisible, as dispersed in vapour, as distributed throughout space, but we cannot conceive of it as absolutely annihilated; and yet if we believe in the omnipotence of God, we believe, or at all events think we believe, in His power of annihilating matter, just as we believe that there was a time before it existed.

I was talking the other day to an old friend, a clergyman of deep devotedness and considerable intellectual power, and I asked him to tell me

frankly what he believed of the future life. He replied that he had no conception of what followed upon death, but that he believed that one would be ultimately restored to a species of consciousness; during which time one would become aware with an infinite remorse of one's sins, failures and shortcomings; and, this purging process accomplished, that we should be absorbed in the contemplation of the perfection of God. I agreed that this was a beautiful, a noble and a sustaining thought, but I said that I would ask him what evidence he had for the belief. He said that he based it upon the universal intuition of the human soul, and that the Christian revelation assured him of the truth of it. He said that of course there was an infinite variety of intuition on the subject, and that though human beings of different nationalities and creeds had defined the course and nature of the future life in various ways, yet there remained the fixed conviction, common to all humanity, of the continued existence of the soul. "Believing as I do," he continued, "in the truth of the Christian revelation, I hold that the future existence of the soul follows the course which I have described, although I do not pretend to define the exact details."



This faith is, with modifications, what I suppose the majority of believing Christians hold; but what does not satisfy me in it is the absence of any definite evidence of the fact. Such a belief seems to me nothing more than the confirming of one intuition by another, because the belief in the Christian revelation is of itself of the nature of an intuition. The theory, indeed, of an omnipotent and perfectly benevolent God is not wholly confirmed by the phenomena of the world; indeed, the belief in a future existence is of itself of the nature of a deduction, drawn in the face of facts which seem to suggest the contrary, from the assumption that the Creator of the world is both omnipotent and perfectly benevolent.

What then, to be frank, do I believe? Well, it seems to me that just as I cannot conceive of the annihilation of existing matter, neither can I conceive of the annihilation of what I call vital force and consciousness. The life that animates matter is to my mind fully as real and actual as matter itself. As to consciousness, that is a different question, because life can certainly exist, as in the case of a person stunned by a blow, when consciousness does not exist, or when at all events the memory of consciousness does

not exist afterwards. It may be that consciousness is dependent upon the union of life and matter; but I believe with all my heart in the indestructibility of life, and I thus believe that, when I die, when my body moulders into dust, the life that animated it is as much in existence as it was before. Further than this I dare not go, because all the evidence that there is seems to point to a suspension of consciousness after death. How that vital force may be employed I cannot guess. It may sink back into a central reservoir of life, just as the particles of my body will be distributed among both animate and inanimate matter when I have ceased to be. It may be that the vital force which I call myself may be distributed again among other lives; it may be that it is a definite and limited thing, a separate cell or centre; and thus it may hereafter animate another body—such things are not incredible. But in any case it is all in the hands of God; and though I may desire that I knew more definitely what the secret is, it is clear to me that I am not intended to know; and it is clear to me, too, that all who have professed to know, or to assure us of the truth of theories, are either building upon their own imaginations or upon the imaginations of others, and that none

of the theories that we so passionately desire to believe belong to the region of even practical certainties.

What effect this belief, or this suspension of belief, may have upon life and action it is difficult to trace ; but though I would, if indeed I could, hold otherwise, though I would that I could more definitely formulate my faith in the future life, my reason forbids me. It is not that my instinct and intuition do not alike embrace the hope of the preservation of my own identity. If there were any trace, however minute, of rational and scientific evidence on the subject, it would justify me in making a deduction. Such evidence may in the future be forthcoming ; but I can only reluctantly say that I do not think that it is forthcoming either in the past or in the present.

*July 14.*

One must not build too much upon the fact that the instinct of after-existence seems so deeply rooted in the heart ; it may be nothing more than a condition of our present being, for are we not surrounded by similar illusions every day ?

One travels in the brightly-lighted compartment of a train ; as the day darkens outside, we

see, reflected in the window-pane, a picture of the compartment, outlined on the side of the dark cuttings through which the train runs, on the sombre trees and hedges. We see the passengers sit in that visionary place ; we see the cushions of the carriage, the luggage in the racks, the quiet lamp burning. Our senses tell us unmistakably that it is there outside the window, speeding with us ; and yet we know it to be a mere illusion, that it is an inherent property of matter to reflect and to reverse a picture of all that falls within its surface. Those who argue that because the instinct of after-existence is implanted in us, therefore it must be there, may be like a pertinacious child who would maintain that because he had ocular evidence of the existence of that phantom compartment outside the window, it must be there if he could but find it. Indeed, the child has better evidence for the existence of the mirrored place, because at all events he sees it, than we have for the continuance of our existence after death, of which there is no scientific evidence at all.

One must not, of course, treat a metaphor, a parable, as an argument. But the illusion of the mirror is an illusion that we can all test, and find to be an illusion ; yet the illusion is constant and

universal. May not the other be an illusion too, inseparable from our present conditions? Alas, it may be so.

*July 15.*

These thoughts of death, of God, of life, are terrible, inextricable. They buzz round me like busy flies round some helpless creature too weak even to resist. The darkness becomes more dense and impenetrable.

A book which I have been reading says complacently that life is a probation, and that this explains everything ; but it does not explain a thousand things. The theory would be that a man goes on in his pride, and God suddenly strikes him down and says, "There, make the best of it ; show yourself to be a man." Dizzied, bewildered, repressing his groans, the victim lies till he recovers his strength to struggle on a little further, and God smites him down again.

The punishment does not come, the curative punishment, at the right time to some ; it comes too late, when men are paralysed by habit. Some go on still in their wickedness, and the punishment never comes at all. It does not fall on the right person ; innocence and carelessness are punished more severely than cautious and deli-

berate wickedness. Besides, if it is a probation, God is on both sides in the fight. He permits the temptation, and we are told we must be grateful to God if He also sends strength to resist—what if He does not send strength to resist? Some, owing to a happy disposition, pass through life in loving-kindness, rectitude, unselfishness, compassion, brightness. We call such people the hope of the race; but to some such a life is impossible, by reason of inherited tendency. Yet no one can dare to say that the world would be the worse for more of these fine and beautiful natures; indeed, it is our deepest and dearest hope that the number of these elect spirits should increase as the world goes on; why should God not swiftly increase them? Then we are reduced to assuming that there must be a new life to redress the balance of the old, because if there were not another life the inequalities, the injustices of this life, would be intolerable. If life is indeed a probation, then we ought to esteem those happiest who are tempted most and who suffer most. But we do not do this; we speak and think of suffering as the shadow of sin. If our faith were real and vital, we should rejoice with our friends when they suffer and are punished; when we saw them prosperous, happy, untroubled, we should be

overcome with anxiety and doubt. We, too, try to be on both sides of the battle, and thus we fight half-heartedly, not knowing what Lord we obey.

*July 16 and 17.*

The theory that life is a probation is a difficult one to maintain in the presence of the immense number of deaths of children of tender years that takes place in this strangely constructed world of ours. I do not know what the figures are, but I suppose that more human beings die in the first two or three years of their existence than die at any other age. If, then, we constructed our idea of the normal type of humanity by a strict consideration of averages, we should conclude that the normal life of humanity was intended to be only a year or two in duration, and that life was in some cases abnormally prolonged; and yet it is just the other way. We are agreed that the normal life of the perfectly healthy individual, who escapes the accidents that may threaten life, is seventy years or upwards; and yet only a very small minority of the human race attain to it.

Now if we saw that all human beings did attain to maturity of thought and power, we might then be justified in holding that we were all intended

to be confronted with a certain quantity of experience, and that it was designed for the perfecting of character. But when we realise that thousands of human beings die every year without attaining even to intellectual consciousness at all, and that thousands more die before they have reached an age where a human being may begin to be guided by principle rather than by instinct, the theory of probation must surely fall to the ground. If life is intended to develop character, so as to fit us in some way or other for a future life, then what is the purpose which underlies the deaths of millions of the human race before experience has even begun to have any formative effect at all on character? If we really believe in the theory of the probation of life, we are almost bound to believe, as a corollary, in the Oriental doctrine of metempsychosis—namely, that each individual personality has a succession of lives before it ; and even then what explanation is forthcoming of the lives that just open for a few hours or days upon the world, and close again, leaving, too, behind them, alas ! a passionate sorrow in the hearts of bereaved parents ?

If our powers of reason do indeed differentiate us from the animal creation, then why are we subjected to the same inexplicable law that pro-



duces such millions of lives, and yet brings so few to maturity?

If we follow up the question in the light of pure reason, we should naturally conclude that there were two laws at work—a law of vast creative energy, doing its best to develop lives under certain definite laws; and, working across this, a second law, not indeed quite so strong as the creative law, but terribly strong, which was doing its best to suppress the creative energy and render it vain. That is the obvious deduction of pure reason. And yet there is a profound intuition which seems to draw us to believe in a unity of law; and then we seem to perceive that the only way in which life can be maintained is through the sacrifice of other life. If we found that the law of creative energy produced lives precisely calculated with regard to the sustaining qualities of the earth, so that no life need infringe on another life, so that there was room for all and sustenance for all, then we should not need to doubt the unity of law. But life, when we leave the vegetable world, seems to be incapable of sustaining itself without preying upon other lives; and in the vegetable world itself, which can draw sustenance out of what we believe to be inanimate elements, such as water and air, the

unity seems to be nullified by the fact that the production of vegetable forms takes place without reference to the room which each vegetable requires for its existence. I mean that in a tropical forest many seeds cannot come to maturity because of the pressure on the space exerted by the wasteful and prodigal excess of seed-production. Generation then seems to take place quite without any calculated reference to the resources of the earth to sustain the life generated.

There results from this a terrible sense of the extreme precariousness of our lives, surrounded as we are by secret foes and hostile influences which may at any moment overthrow us. Whatever precautions we take, we can only slightly modify the risks that environ us.

No system of religion, no hardly-won code of morals, gives, or attempts to give, the slightest explanation of these appalling facts; indeed, the horror of the situation lies, not so much in the facts, as in the terrible consciousness of them which is given us. Indeed, the very terror seems sent us that we may have a desperate desire for continued existence—so desperate, indeed, that we have no instinctive reluctance to sacrificing other lives, weaker than our own, that we may continue to preserve our own existence.

And then, too, there is the grievous mystery that we can survey the design of God from without, and even feel a sad persuasion that we could arrange it better if we had the power. As though—I do not say it irreverently—God had hardly the time to attend to all the innumerable enterprises which He initiates.

Rest and tranquillity are denied us by the very nature of the case; the very instincts that so tyrannously beset us, indeed, often contain within themselves the seed of death, if they are pursued blindly.

It is, alas, a terrible and inextricable net in which we lie entangled; the sport of monstrous forces which seem at once to menace us with death, and to implant in us the deepest reluctance to experience it.

Yet we can arrive at no certain hope unless we resolutely face these facts. And what is the strangest thing of all, the more we know, the more we explore the causes of things, the more impenetrable does the mystery become.

*July 18.*

I suppose that philosophers and religious teachers would alike say to one who is engaged as I am, however fitfully and ignorantly, in en-

deavouring to track truth to its lair, that I must pursue it with a wider view, a more extensive grasp. But this is just what I cannot do. I am not pursuing truth in the spirit of a statistician or a philosopher; I am rather dogged and pursued myself by a question I cannot answer, a doubt that I cannot resolve. The impossibility of taking a wider view is caused by the fact that one can never know perfectly the conditions of any other life beside one's own. There are things in every life about which the persons concerned will not and, indeed, cannot speak. However frankly and candidly a man told the thoughts of his heart, it would be practically impossible for him to do so without a bias or an aim. Very few people, indeed, have even the skill to do it; for to make a candid confession of one's thoughts demands a considerable skill of expression; and it means, too, a power of putting into precise words vague and indefinite ideas, which is the hardest thing in the world even for one who is a practised writer; and thus, condemned as we are to silence, it may be said that it is impossible for us ever to look at life exactly from the point of view of another. It is hard, indeed, to look at it fairly and without prejudice, even in our own case, because of our tendency not so

much to excuse ourselves, as to make out a slightly more favourable, more interesting, more romantic case than is justified by the facts.

If, then, we can only survey the problem fully and fairly from our own point of view, our only chance is to correct our beliefs by our own experience. Looking back upon my own life, I will say frankly that I have been very tenderly and lovingly used by God. He put me into a place in the world in which my faculties could have freer play than in any situation that I could myself have designed. He made me sensitive both to pain and joy; He has sent me very little pain, and abundance of joy. I have never been consciously tempted beyond my power of resistance, because, though I have not always resisted temptation, there was no reason, outside of my own wilful heart, why I should not have resisted it. Such dark and sad experience as I have had in my life has invariably ended by ministering to my happiness. God has enabled me to effect far more than I could have hoped, or ever did hope to effect, by putting me in circumstances which gave me the very opportunity of using the powers He endued me with. He has sent me all the things which I desired, and with the added blessing of having to earn them. If I have ever desired a

thing, and failed to gain it, I have always been faithfully and gently shown that it would not have brought me happiness, and that I only desired it because I did not really know what it entailed, but judged it by a superficial view.

And thus I see that, for myself at least, my life has been ordered not only on wise and gracious lines, but with a singular adaptation to all my faculties, desires, and wishes. Whatever I have had to bear, and it has been little enough, has never been intolerable. Again and again, when I have thought myself confronted with some complex and seemingly disastrous situation, the path has been strangely smoothed at the very moment it has been required, and not before. It is indeed true that, when I look round the world, I see inexplicable tragedies, hopeless sufferings, miserable lives. I see, or seem to see, tender and innocent creatures, involved, through no fault of their own, in disasters of which I cannot see the justice. I see characters, hampered from the first by unhappy weakness, plunged deeper into degradation. But I reflect that I cannot see these lives from the inside; and, further, that I only see them at a point in their development, with the future as yet unveiled. There have been times, indeed, in my

own life, when I have felt that, if I could have had the choice, I never would have been born, and that no amount of joy could ever compensate for the suffering of which I was made involuntarily the victim. But hitherto I can only frankly say that all has been made plain. I can cry, like the old Psalmist, "*Oh, come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.*"

And then, too, how rare it is to find even those who are most hopelessly afflicted blaming God for their affliction. How pathetically patient men are! How they tend, as a rule, to feel that they have deserved their sufferings! How hopefully they turn to whatever consolations are left, and bless God for them! How seldom does one hear people say, "The sin was not my own fault; and if I had my life to live again, I could not, even if I would, live otherwise!" How much more compassionate people are, as a rule, of others than of themselves!

Thus we are not left without light in the world; even in our own dulled and clouded hearts, when the radiance of God beats upon them, we see sometimes an answering gleam within, like the secret fire that sleeps in the uncut gem. Our work should be to clear the surface of

the dim irregularities that break and blur the radiance. May not the work of life upon the soul be like the graving and polishing of some rough gem, till, when the rough and dented husk is worn away, the stone that seemed so cloudy, so minute, so shallow, holds within it a pure and lucid well of tinted light?

July 19.

I have been reading the Psalms to-day. The Eighty-eighth Psalm is the saddest in the Psalter, because it is the only one, I think, which is a cry from a burdened heart from beginning to end. The mood never changes, the cloud never lifts; it ends on a sad note, the note of desolation, the unutterable loneliness that sorrow brings, "*My lovers and friends hast Thou put away from me; and hid mine acquaintance out of my sight.*" Is there any poetry in the world that speaks so tenderly and simply of the sorrow of the heart as some of these psalms? Their beauty lies in the fact that they are the work of a man or of men, who just entered, with a transparent sincerity, without (it seems) any desire for literary effect, into the deepest secrets of the heart; one never feels the hand of the artist; there seems to be no attempt to heighten the mood, to darken the shadows.



There is only a perfect dignity and a perfect directness. Neither is there any sense of spectral effect, any egotism, any self-pity; it seems not the voice of a man, but the voice of humanity, the cry of patient sorrow that is heard. It is this very fact that the psalms are in a sense so impersonal that gives them their wonderful power over the soul; one does not seem, in reading them, to be listening to the querulous complaints of a fellow-man; they rather seem to draw into themselves all the strains of sorrow, all the streams of human tears, all the sense of desertion and loneliness that sorrow brings.

In this one psalm alone, as I have said, there is no single ray of light or hope; most of them are written in a mood of recollected sorrow, of sorrow seen in retrospect from a calm haven.

*"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me and heard my calling."* That, alas, is the weakness of human consolation, that it depends upon hope; what of those to whom He does not incline, whose darkening life is going down to the grave, through slow gradations, inevitably foreseen, of suffering and decay? Consider the book of Job, the book which faces the darkest problems with the supremest courage and patience. The essence of it is that Job is re-

stored to all his prosperity and happiness. The weakness of it lies in the assumption that the strong sons and daughters who were born to him after he had emerged from his miseries, could make up for those whom he had lost. It is an almost childlike ending, because it seems as though it appeared to the author that all the recollection of the brave and joyful children whom Job had lost by such sudden and unexpected strokes of calamity, the thought of their childish days, of all their vanished love and brightness, could cast no shadow over the mind of the patient patriarch.

And in the psalms, too, the essence of the situation is that the light and joy should be restored. What one craves for is something that should bring consolation and strength, and even joy, in the face of irreparable calamity, in the presence of a hopeless fear. The writers of these psalms did not draw their comfort from the thought of a future life; they are comforted because they are brought out of the mire, because their feet are set again upon the rock, because the gladness of life is restored. Is it possible to find consolation face to face with the fact that the gladness of life, that strength and health will not be restored?

In some of these psalms the writers seem to take comfort from the sense of national greatness, from the memory of the wonders that God has wrought for His chosen people.

*“And thou continuest holy ; O thou worship of Israel. Our fathers hoped in thee ; they trusted in thee and thou didst deliver them.”*

It is the thought of the possible deliverance that makes the burden tolerable.

What I desire to find and cannot, is something that would sustain when no deliverance is possible. Not a stoical courage, not a mere passive endurance ; but something which made martyrs of old go to their death with songs upon their lips. Suppose that we cannot claim for ourselves the precise and definite hopes that they claimed ; suppose that we cannot believe in our immediate translation to a land of hope and light, with companies of happy saints to welcome us, with pure and perfect joy waiting to receive us, what then ?

Is it possible to rest upon a passionate desire that the will of God should be fulfilled, to take every pain and every fear as a direct gift from His hand ? Only in that direction is any hope possible ; and yet how many of us are capable of that ? how many of us have even a chance of

learning how to be capable of it? Answering for myself, I am not capable of it, and I see no reason to believe that with my fitful energy, my sensitiveness to pain, my swift abandonment to despair, I can ever in my life learn it. What I need is the honey out of the strong rock to comfort me, sweetness from an unexpected quarter, out of the stern face of the crag; sweet refreshment stored where all seemed dark and hard. I have seen death face to face; and what was given me was indifference, apathy, a passive courage, that came not from realising the worst, but from an inability to realise it. Yet after all, one needs not to dispute the goodness of God, to quarrel with the quality of the strength given one, if only the strength is given. But I dare not say that I felt that God was with me; He was there, He was over me; but I walked through the valley, not like a bold man facing the end, but like a child in a dark tunnel, clasping a mother's arm, his face hidden on her shoulder; secure, and only wondering that I was not more afraid.

Perhaps one desires too much—one desires to be strong, to be independent, to be bold; and one has to learn one's utter weakness. Perhaps the secret lies there.

*July 21, 22.*

I have for a long time back, for some years indeed, been much pre-occupied with thoughts of death. Some might call it a morbid pre-occupation, but it has not been that. It is morbid if one dwells on the material side of death, pictures the sad incidents of mortality, sees the stiffened image with blurred and filmy eyes, the waxen pallor, the faint smile; but I have never dwelt on these things; it has been with me a pre-occupation as to what the meaning of it all is, what prospect of hope lies behind the unmanning sense of finality.

I have read books on the subject, meditations, scientific treatises, and so-called philosophical consolations. But now that I have been close to it, all these books seem to me unutterably false and vain. They do not approach the real experience at all. They seem to have been composed by comfortable people sitting in armchairs and trying to fancy what death would be like; but it is like nothing in the world, different, not in degree, but in kind, from any imagination that any one can form. I suppose that different people have different experiences; but the hollowest and emptiest of all the things written on the subject

seem to me to be the consolations suggested. For instance, it is said in religious books that the memory of a virtuous life brings peace, the memory of an ill-spent life brings agony. If there is any shadow of truth in that, it resides in the fact, I believe, that people of virtuous and temperate lives are generally people of well-balanced and tranquil temperaments, not as a rule imaginative or passionate or desirous ; such people would be likely to meet death as simply and quietly as they had met life ; but on the other hand, people who have yielded freely to temptation, who have gratified sensual impulse, are generally people of unbalanced, eager, impatient temperaments, greedy of joy, subject to terror, imaginative, highly-strung, restless, fanciful. To such as these death would perhaps be full of fears. But it is sensitiveness and imaginativeness that make, I believe, the difference, and not the thought of sins and failures. The greatest saint in the world, if of a self-reproachful temperament, would be likely to have abundance of failures to recall, a deep sense of opportunities missed, a passionate remorse for wasted hours ; while on the other hand a strong, coarse, bestial nature would probably face death with a surly indifference.

But my own experience is that one hardly thinks of the past at all, that the imagination is dulled and the senses concentrated upon the ebbing life. I disliked the discomfort I felt, more than I dreaded the thought of death; and I was simply not strong enough to reflect at all.

As to other consolations, they are no less fanciful; for the fact is that one craves for no consolation at all. One writer whom I read, I think it was a Latin philosopher, says that the thought of the universality of the law of death is in itself a comfort. As Hamlet says, "Thou know'st 'tis common." The thought that all men who have ever lived have had to pass through the gate, that all will some day pass through it, must, the writer avers, have an effect in alleviating the horror of death. Well, I can say candidly that such a thought never even dimly entered my mind. The loneliness of the experience is so great, the isolation so complete, that one does not think, at least I did not, of others in connection with it at all. My feeling was that the experience was so strange that I could not fancy that any one had ever experienced it before; it appeared absolutely unique and personal.

No, these consolations, these sustaining thoughts

may be indulged in when one is alive and well ; but when one is dying, it seems as if nothing that one had ever thought, or that any one had ever thought, had any bearing upon the vast fact. The fact indeed is so vast that one is absorbed in contemplation of it ; it takes one in a sense out of oneself, though it leaves the identity as the one existing thing in the world. I cannot describe it ; the thought cannot be recaptured, cannot be told in words, because it is so surprising, so new, so unlike anything in the world. I do not think that any one has ever before tried to describe it ; at least I cannot recollect that I have ever read anything which in the least prepared me for it. I suppose that few people have ever been so near death, with perfect consciousness and lucidity of mind, as I have, without dying ; or if they have, they feel as I do, that it is of little use to attempt to describe the indescribable.

Suppose that one day, walking along a familiar road, and turning a corner, one found that, instead of the well-known scene which one had expected, an enormous chasm had opened in the ground ; that one could see its precipitous sides, huge broken ledges and seams of rock, the edges fringed with twisted tree roots ; that one could gaze into the depths and see at an un-



imaginable distance a gleam of fire and smoke, and that strange, remote and awful sounds, like falling rocks, bursting reservoirs, splintering crags came faintly up. One would not at first think of what had become of the fields and houses that one knew, one would not even wonder what the cause of this frightful convulsion was; one would simply be absorbed in gazing, and probably the emotion would be in a way almost pleasurable.

Well, death is like that! It is a sudden unaccountable disruption and suspension of familiar life. One seems brought into contact with something infinitely great, ancient, remote, marvellous; it obliterates all familiar trains of thought, habits, and ideas. They are all swallowed up in its vastness. And thus—at least this is my experience—one has no time to think of repentance, or consolation, or courage. One does not desire any of these things, not because one does not need them, but simply because one does not recollect them. Everything is swallowed up in awe, wonder, and mystery. Yet, as I have said, it is not a painful thought; it has something that is pleasurable about it, though I cannot say where the pleasure lies—it is the pleasure perhaps of feeling one's self in contact with a tremendous experience, an adventure beside which all the

discoveries of explorers, all the dreams of poets, all the tales of travellers, all the glories of the world, sink into paltry insignificance. When Vasco de Balboa saw the Pacific from Darien, he thought little of his troubles, his wanderings, his dangers, the glory that was to come to him. The thing was there, that prodigious rolling ocean; and for a moment he was content simply to gaze; thus in death one is brought suddenly face to face with the tideless ocean, and everything else in the world fades away at the sight.

It is afterwards that one reflects and meditates, thinks what one ought to have felt; but at the time there is nothing but an awe-struck, an absorbed contemplation.

*July 24.*

How strangely blind and unobservant we are about the real and wonderful blessings of our life; we are scarcely grateful for them; we scarcely know that they are there until we lose them.

If you go down the old North Road from Huntingdon to Royston, soon after passing Wimpole, that elm-embowered village, a little road turns off to Shingay, which is one of those odd and rare things, a name on the map without

a place to correspond to it. If you turn down the road, a little further on, you pass the Vicarage of Wendy, a low plastered house prettily embowered in trees; to the right of the gate, visible and audible from the road, in a shrubbery, there is a fountain, with a pipe perhaps six feet high, that spills itself day and night, with a pleasant tinkling, into a wide mossy basin, and runs away in a little stream. The country all round is perfectly flat, pleasant green water meadows intersected by many streams, to be known lower down, where they unite, as the Cam. I had often been by this road, and the fountain was well known to me by sight; but beyond thinking that the place was very well supplied with water, I had never reflected that it was strange that water, obviously at high pressure, should thus gush out high above the ground, day and night, in a flat country; but beyond thinking that it was rather a wasteful business for a country vicar to have a great fountain running day and night in his shrubbery, and the water gushing to waste by the roadside, I had never thought about the matter, until I saw in a little book that this is one of the most extraordinary springs in the country. No one knows whence it is fed; probably by

some cave reservoir among the wolds above Wimpole; because the pressure in the spring is so great that the reservoir, wherever it is, must be at a considerable height, and there is no high ground nearer than the wolds. The road indeed owes its existence to the fact that it probably represents an ancient track which passed by the spring. And so by some dark underground passage, centuries old, the sparkling chalk water caught upon the hills is led down into the plain, and made to leap high out of the ground. But to me it is a parable, as I said, of how dull of heart and mind one is to apprehend these beautiful and strange things.

It has been always so with myself, I fear. I become aware now, in my long and slow confinement, of what a beautiful treasure was given me in the shape of health. I never valued it; I hardly knew I had it. I used to feel, I think, about invalids, that there was a certain affectation about their seclusion, their abstention from activities. I do not think I even pitied them very much, but thought of them as leading rather comfortable and indolent lives. Now, to be well seems to me the one thing worth having. I used to fret over little ailments which sometimes caused me slight inconvenience; but

I never knew what it was to spend a day in bed, or to be conscious of any restrictions affecting work or food or exercise. It is not so much the restrictions that are galling; it is the unmanly sense of feebleness and irritable discontent that is the affliction. To read for an hour tires me; to drag myself downstairs and back is as much as I can manage. The worst of my own condition is that my mind is perfectly clear, and that the defect is a purely mechanical one.

It is a heavy trial: there is no use disguising it. I can speak and write of it now, since I have heard that it is merely a question, in all probability, of time and patience. But a few months ago, when I felt the same feebleness day after day, and when I dared not look forwards, or hope for any improvement, it was a thing that was simply too bad to speak about. I did not want sympathy: I simply wanted strength and health.

I ask myself whether I can trace any benefit from the discipline of those weeks. Well, there comes a certain grim patience, I think. At first, the mind wearies itself with endless hopes and anxieties, until it is worn out; then there comes a time when one learns simply not to think of

it—to live for the day and in the day, to make the most of the smallest pleasures, the simplest distractions; but the worst of having a heavy fear hanging in the background is that the observation, the sense of beauty, becomes such a torture. One sees some beautiful thing, a flower, a flying ray, a sunset; and just as one has a tiny thrill of pleasure, out of the dark comes the sinister hand and plucks one back. What is the use of taking pleasure in it, when you are yourself maimed and helpless, just drifting on through a few uneasy hours to death? No words can express the haunting dreariness of the thought. There is nothing romantic, nothing inspiring about that dark valley, the valley of the Shadow. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* the place was full of curiosities—gins, for instance (I have often wondered what a gin was like), and pitfalls; there were caverns seen dimly through the gloom, with awful figures round them; there were fiends and hobgoblins, such as the thing like a lion that came after the Pilgrim at a great padding pace. If there had been any of these startling accessories, the Valley might have been a more stimulating place than it proved to be for me, in spite of its terrors; but there was only the blank and shapeless gloom,

the hopeless dreariness that turned to ashes whatever it touched.

Now, thank God, it is very different, because I see the light ahead, and the very restrictions to which I submit have a joyful air about them.

But what of the poor souls around whom the accursed air continues to darken and to blacken, who are met daily, instead of hope, with an ever-increasing despair, a growing weakness? How and where and when will God atone for this?

And thus I return to my first thought, namely, how ungrateful we are for the blessings of our untroubled days. It comes home to me now what a supreme gift is the gift of unconscious health; and I pray God to forgive me for having received from His hand so rich a treasure so dully, as a right, and for having used it so lightly.

*July 25.*

I once knew an old lady, a woman of a naturally bright and hopeful temperament, who suffered for several years from a fatal complaint, with frequent accesses of intolerable pain. The good clergyman of the place, who laboured much to console her, bade her think of the

Crucifixion of Christ, and of all the agony of the Cross. "Yes," she said pathetically, "but that was so short—only a few hours. I am crucified day after day."

That is not the only difficulty about the story of the Crucifixion. It has often seemed to me that if Christ by virtue of His Divine nature foresaw what was before Him, the peace and glory into which He would be received in a few hours, the eternal benefit He was working out for the human race, the Crucifixion can have hardly appeared terrible at all. Why, even I, a frail and shrinking mortal, if I could be sure that, after a few hours of agony, I should step into life and light, and if at the same time I knew that my sufferings would bring relief to even my own nation, I should not hesitate to submit to untold tortures. And there are human beings all over the world who, without any sure hope of life to come, and without any deep conviction to tell them that their sufferings will benefit a single human soul, have to bear as bad or worse, day by day. Either the knowledge of what was coming was hidden from the mind of Christ,—and His despairing cry that God had forsaken Him seems to testify to that—or else He had to endure a mysterious agony of which we have



no hint; otherwise the narrative of the Crucifixion hardly holds any sustaining example for us at all.

And does it indeed sustain us in the worst agony to know that others have suffered similar pain? For my own part, I can only say that the thought has no power to sustain or console myself. One is alone with one's pain, plunged in despairing misery.

*Thou holdest mine eyes waking, said the sad Psalmist: I am so feeble that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old and the years that are past. I call to remembrance my song, and in the night I commune with mine own heart and search out my spirits.*

*Will the Lord absent Himself for ever and will He be no more entreated? Is His mercy clean gone for ever; and is His promise come utterly to an end for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious; and will He shut up His loving-kindness in displeasure?*

*And I said, it is mine own infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most Highest. I will remember the works of the Lord, and call to mind thy wonders of old time. I will think also of all thy works, and my talking shall be of thy doings.*

Those are the words of a man who has tasted the bitterest cup of suffering; and he found comfort, or tried to find comfort, in the thought of the history of his nation and the guiding hand of God. He must have been one of rare fortitude and noble patriotism. For myself, in those dark moments, the wonders of old time had no meaning. The question was whether God would show His power for me to-day. If I had been nobler, stronger, more generous, I might have thrilled in my weakness with dreams of famous men, noble acts of self-surrender, suffering courageously borne. But I could not. Such thoughts were as nothing to me. I had not voluntarily incurred my suffering; I had no hope that it would benefit another. I am here speaking with entire candour, holding nothing back, not trying to make out a good case for myself; and I say that in that hour of despair there was not a single thought either of philosophy or religion that came to my help. I lay a helpless victim, prostrated by the stroke of God. I felt as some poor woodland beast may feel who has been struck down by a shot from a gun, and drags itself crying a few feet among the furrows, with the dog running in upon it. Why had I been born? What had I done to

merit this heavy misery? I did not arraign the justice or the power of God: I only suffered. The only effort of which I was capable was just to try and conceal my grief from those who loved me, force myself to speak and smile, and then to sink back into my lonely misery again.

*July 27.*

It is very strange that, though I have twice faced death without fear, I cannot learn not to fear it. Now that I have come back to life and ease, and feel myself growing stronger, my imagination begins to array the terrors of death again. I feel that I did not realise it at the time; I look back at myself as one might look at a man drifting asleep in a boat down to a dreadful cataract. I begin again to picture to myself the horror of the dark, the isolation, the cessation of all familiar thoughts and activities, the dropping of the curtain on the scenes where I have lived, the rooms, the houses, the fields I have loved. Illness and absence are only tolerable because one hopes to be restored to the world one knows, the old easy ways, the faces and talk of friends, the pleasant habits of life. I do not

know which I dread most—the possibility of ceasing to be, of blank annihilation, of an endless sleep, or finding myself launched alone on a vast shadowy world, with everything to learn, everything to perceive. I thought I should have learned not to dread death, from having twice drawn near it, without being shadowed by it; but it seems I have learnt nothing. What if the next time it should be different, and if the terrors that I now feel should visit me?

I remember once taking an anæsthetic, and the horror of the recollection would forbid my ever willingly taking one again. After I had lost all sense of consciousness of my surroundings, I went through a terrible agony in the inmost cell of my being; I felt as though in some place of blank walls or dark waters my life was being crushed out of me, or rather that I myself was being crushed and stamped into nothingness. It was not pain, but unutterable horror. The will seemed unable to consent to bear what it was forced to endure.

*July 29.*

What does one mean by faith? I think I understand by it a deep intuition, a lively hope, a path that descends into the darkness, but the

first few steps of which are illumined by the light of reason and knowledge; enough to believe that the path still winds through the gloom.

I think that the discerning of a few steps, even of one step, is an integral part of faith. Some people seem to think it is enough to possess the intuition and the hope, without any degree of certainty; what lights their path is only another intuition, another hope. Some find the light in the statements of revealed religion; but what I miss here is the fragment of scientific, of verifiable certainty, that I require. I do not think that faith is simply a blind confidence, a taking on trust what others choose to tell one, or what men have handed down, because there are many persons of other religions who have the same blind confidence in the truth of their creed; and who shall then decide which of the creeds is the true one?

No, it is not faith, if reason contradicts it; it is not faith merely to be prepared to be bitterly disappointed if one's hope turns out to be vain. But it is faith when reason can illuminate a little of the way, and confirm the fact that the path is there, though one cannot discern the whole extent of it. Reason says, "The track

certainly begins here; I see it glimmering a little way into the dark; but it may stop there, it may lead to wide wildernesses or broken precipices." The task of faith is to contradict the dark surmises of reason, to say, "It is enough to know that the path has a clear beginning; my hope, my instinct tells me that it leads on through the darkness." Neither is complete without the other. Reason would keep us lingering on the threshold of our journey, afraid to set foot in the darkness, but faith without reason to assure it may be nothing more than a vain hope, a beautiful dream. Only the perception of truth can make us dare to start; only faith can give us confidence to proceed.

*July 31.*

I had to bear an attack of violent pain yesterday—not a serious matter, but the pain was almost intolerable for all that: it came in blinding flashes; it seemed to have almost a poisonous hue and even scent of its own. I tried to be philosophical; I tried to see if I could analyse what the extraordinary thing was, this acute and tingling sensation which for the moment absorbed all other sensations, and concentrated the

mind with a sort of shuddering horror upon a thing which seemed so external to itself, and yet so overwhelming, so unmanning, so intolerable.

The semi-scientific optimist says that pain is a kind of danger-signal, and warns us that there is something that needs attention. That if there were no sensation in these thinly guarded, elaborate bodies of ours, we should go about with open wounds which would soon make an end of us; but the worst of this is that, like all optimistic theories, it only fits the general facts, and does not apply all along the line. Some of the most agonising pains we endure, such as toothache and neuralgia, portend no serious mischief, whereas some of the deadlier diseases give no warning of their approach.

One cannot help feeling that an Omnipotent Power, framing our constitution upon such delicate lines, ought either to have guarded us against attacks of sensations so profoundly disagreeable, or to have proportioned the pain to the seriousness of the cause; or else that there is some rich and deep significance in the mystery which we cannot fathom. Here, again, we seem left so sadly in the dark. I have a friend who has to endure at intervals long and racking attacks of neuralgia. They enfeeble and un-

nerve him ; they make him incapable of work and thought ; he drags himself wearily back to life again after one of these bouts of anguish. I have heard him say that he cannot trace any beneficial results from his sufferings, and that the only consequence is acute irritability and futility. I suppose that he has endured in the course of his life, without any particular commiseration, an amount of pain which far exceeds all that many a martyr who has won eternal glory for his constancy has had to endure. The fact that in my friend's case this suffering is involuntary does not seem to me to make the mystery any plainer, indeed rather to deepen it, because if pain is voluntarily incurred, there is a certain bracing quality which comes to one's assistance.

My own slight sufferings have not given me any increase of faith or patience. I only look back to those hours with a sort of incredulous horror, to think that there can be anything in the world which seems to be so profoundly contrary to all one's natural instincts, and which seems to bear so little wholesome fruit. It seems such a treachery, in a world where there is so much that is beautiful and kindly, to find oneself suddenly confronted with a thing so ineffably horrible.



One thing indeed it brings home to us a little, and that is the pain of the world; and at least after such sufferings I find myself stretching out blind hands of supplication to the Father of all, that He will send to those that have to suffer some light in the darkness. But then there falls on me a terrible shadow at the thought of all the pain that is being borne, all the world over, by poor beasts of the field, by tender children, by sensitive women, by agonised men. I see the glance of frightened eyes, the blanched face, the beaded brow, the clenched hands, the restless movements of sufferers, until the pressure of the vision becomes intolerable. Pain falls so often upon those least fitted to bear it, upon those who cannot understand. One's heart goes out in utter pity to all who suffer, with a deep desire to comfort; and yet I cannot even be sure that the prayer that I make with all the strength of my heart will cause God to lessen or to lighten a single pang. He would not surely have sent it so inexorably if it had not some deep and tender meaning; and if it has that deep and tender meaning, how dare I ask that it should be lightened?

*August 1.*

I should get better more quickly if I could but yield myself to a wise passivity, and let the healing waters flow over me. Last night a great daddy-longlegs came blundering and whizzing about my lamp; fortunately for himself he was not burnt, and feeling tired, he made his way to the ceiling, attached himself to it by his long forelegs, and with wings and body and his other long clumsy legs hanging down, he addressed himself to sleep.

To-day there has sate beside me on my table a dull fly with brown reticulated wings—an ugly fellow enough, with long whisks attached to his horny head. He seems sunk in a reverie. I disturbed him once; he waved his antennæ in remonstrance, and settled down to sleep again. The dog here, a collie, who has taken an unaccountable fancy to me, comes and lies for hours on the mat, hoping perhaps that I may be sensible enough to rise and take him out for a walk. He sleeps all night, he sleeps all day; only very occasionally, with his head laid flat upon the ground, I see that he follows my motions with brown and wistful eyes. If I speak, he does not move, but just thumps his

tail upon the floor. I wish I could sleep as he does; he resigns himself to slumber with a happy sigh, as if he were comfortably weary of the world. But all this time my own mind is a kind of torture to me. I can only read for a little, only write for a few minutes at a time: I seem unable to reflect or meditate. Now would be the time, if I could, to think out a new book, but I cannot. The mind, *ennuyé* and vacuous, seems to wander about listlessly, like a person in a lumber room, pulling out a memory, putting it back again, peering into corners, looking at things on shelves. It is degrading to find that one has so little control of it. I must learn to meditate, but that seems a difficult business. I suppose that I have got so used to thinking on paper, that I cannot do it otherwise. The Arabs have a state which they call, I think, *Kef*. It is not sleep, but neither is it waking. It is a kind of drowsy musing, in which the hours pass, they say, with great content and great rapidity. Perhaps I can practise this: it seems worth practising.

The worst of the bodily exhaustion from which I am suffering half unconsciously is that it produces in the daytime periods of sleep which are quite different in quality from anything I have ever known. I am weighed down by an

intolerable drowsiness ; I sink deep into a sort of heavy stupor. I awake with a sensation of dismay, not knowing where I am or even who I am. Then consciousness returns with an unpleasant shock ; and soon the drowsiness overpowers me again. The misery of it is that such sleep does not make the time pass rapidly ; one can sleep and wake thus a dozen times in an hour, and be astonished to find that each stupor has only lasted a few moments ; but one seems better after it ; it only shows the desperate efforts which Nature makes to obtain the oblivion and repose of which she is in need.

*August 4.*

I remember copying an epitaph in a rustic church some years ago—Bassingbourn, I think it was, near Royston, a pleasant leafy village. It was the grave of a gentleman of St. Ives, *who, having experienced many of the Trials and most of the Vicissitudes of Fortune, calmly surrendered his breath in his 63rd year.* I wish I knew what this pathetic person had endured, and why he found it so easy to die ; but it seems to me a sad mystery if the most that life can do for us is to make us ready to leave it.

Again there comes into my mind • a letter

written by a very genial and innocent philosopher, who found that he was suffering from a fatal complaint necessitating an immediate operation, from which it was doubtful if he could recover. He was a guileless, public-spirited, unaffected man; and he wrote to a friend to tell him what had happened, saying that he found the prospect a very terrible one of quitting a world "in which, after all, it had been sweet to live." The words, I think, are a pathetic echo of a beautiful line in Tennyson's "Maud." He did survive the operation, though only for a few months; he had shown a perfect tranquillity and courage throughout, visiting his friends up to the very day of the operation, conversing on all sorts of matters with cheerful and unabated interest, with this dark shadow in the background. Perhaps we are stronger and braver than we know or dare to hope; but the worst of reason and imagination is that we can so clearly forecast and anticipate our sufferings and our end. The beasts of the field suffer too; but they have, so far as we know, only to bear the actual pain of disease, they have not to bear the tenfold agony of foreboding.

What we all desire is happiness and tranquillity, and we care little how we achieve it, so long as it

is there. God sends it us sometimes in spite of suffering, in spite of ourselves; but what we have to aim at is a vital faith, which can sustain us in the presence even of the terror of the unknown. It may not be in our power to attain to the precise and intimate belief which sent martyrs to their death with an overpowering joy, but we can all practise a confidence and an acquiescence in the will of God. It is strange that we never seem to question why we are happy, in our happy days. That seems our native air; we only begin to question the why and wherefore of things when we are miserable.

Oh strange and sad mystery, as old as time: the mystery that we cannot solve, and that God will not solve for us! Our reason tells us that God is mighty; our heart tells us that He is kind.

I remember once staying in the house of a blind man. His wife and I went out for a walk, leaving him, at his request, sitting in the garden. We had hardly started, when she remembered that she had something to ask him, and we returned. He had already settled himself in his chair with that perfect stillness, that sublime patience that I have seen more than once in a blind man. I was near enough to hear what

was said, though not near enough for him to be aware of my presence. She took his hand, and asked him the question, adding, "Are you sure you want nothing?" He put her hand to his lips and kissed it, and smiled with a pathos that went to my heart. "Nothing but my sight, dear," he said. It was the only time I had ever heard him say anything that was not perfectly cheerful and contented, and it affected me to tears. She bent over him weeping, encircling him with her arms. His patient helplessness evoked in her the deepest and tenderest love that I have ever seen, and at which I had often marvelled.

I marvelled no longer, and I felt, too, that if we could but approach the Father of all with the same sweet and perfect patience, we should learn our lesson sooner, whatever that lesson may be.

*August 5.*

There is a mode of meeting death which one sometimes encounters in histories and biographies, even occasionally in real life, which arouses in us a species of shuddering admiration. That is the way in which it is met by the cynical, courageous, well-bred gentleman, and it consists in opposing

to the assaults of death not the shield of faith, but the shield of good manners. Such was the death-bed of Charles II., a man whose theory of life was to do whatever amused him, whether he found it in the pursuit of pleasure or in the governing of a kingdom. He had no belief in virtue or unselfishness; but he believed in personal honour and courage, and jested courteously to the very brink of the grave. Such a death-bed is not an edifying spectacle; but, after all, it is impossible not to admire a human being who, confronted with the darkness after a life full of zest and delight, allows no shadow of dismay to darken his features, no trace of timidity or complaint to bewilder his speech. It testifies, at least, to an extraordinarily high spirit, to a singular personal bravery; and the indomitable quality, exhibited by a frail creature in the presence of the darkest judgments of its Maker, may be condemned, but cannot be despised; it is like the courage of the red ant, who, if he be crushed to death, spends his last moments in an ungovernable fury, biting with all his might at the hand which slays him. I read once in an old biography of a French nobleman who received his death-warrant from a physician, and who made it a point of honour to spend the few



months that remained to him in exactly the same mood of distinguished and icy politeness in which he had spent his life. He allowed no attack of pain, however agonising, to prevent his appearing among his guests and exhibiting his accustomed courtesy. His view seems to have been that if his Creator chose to do what seemed to be an inconsiderate, ill-bred, and disagreeable thing, and to deprive him of the life which he had adorned, he would at least set a better example himself of distinguished behaviour. Such men as these are sustained by an invincible pride which has incontestably something that is noble about it. One feels that it runs in the wrong channels, because it depends upon high lineage and a family tradition of magnificence; and the error lies in treating this inheritance as a thing which is held as a personal right, when it is, after all, only a gift bestowed by God. Such princes seem to hold instinctively that they confer a favour on humanity by belonging to it, and bear the consciousness of personal superiority with an innate and unshakable confidence. Yet the tranquillity with which they face death is of a fine quality, though the tranquillity of Socrates or Sir Thomas More is of an infinitely higher kind. In the former case it springs from a

majestic pride which will not suffer a man to do anything that is unworthy or mean at the most tragic of moments. In the case of Socrates and Sir Thomas More, whom the near prospect of death did not even deprive of their sense of humour, it arises from a marvellous balance of mind, a serene realisation of the fact that, whether a man lives or dies, suffers or is glad, he is in the hands of the God who made him. The more that we practise this habit of mind, the more chance there is that we may meet death with calm dignity ; but even so, this cannot be attained without an innate gift of courage, a power of resolutely shutting the doors of the mind against painful and enfeebling imaginations. We can none of us be sure that the approach of pain and death may not bewilder, terrify, and unman us ; but God, who knows our weakness and our strength, will not judge us for that. There can be no greater mistake than to judge the vitality and depth of a man's faith than by his conduct in the last closing act of his life ; a sensitive and imaginative man, who has lived purely and unselfishly, may be overwhelmed and prostrated by the terrors of the dark end, while another man, who has lived unkindly and selfishly, pursuing his own pleasure, may make his last bow with

a sneering courage, an unflinching courtesy, and pass undismayed and untroubled beneath the shadowy porches of death.

*August 6 and 7.*

I have often wondered whether the ideas of Oriental nations about death do indeed differ so strongly as we suppose from our own. It seems that their hold on life is somewhat feebler, and I suppose that the result of life in hot climates is to pitch the quality of it in a lower key, to decrease the desire for vigour and activity, and to increase the pleasure of indolence and acquiescence. We are always told that the Chinese have little fear of death, and that the payment of a small sum to a Chinaman's family will persuade a man to suffer death as a substitute for a criminal.

But the theory that it arises from a more languid appreciation of life, from a temperamental acquiescence in the thought of the long silence, the last repose, has been for me upset by what we have heard of the behaviour of the Japanese in this last war. Here we have an intensely vital and progressive nation, assimilating new ideas, full of aspirations after reform and nationality, thrilling with political ardour.

They appear to have fought in their battles with an incredible courage and devotion, and to have been literally in love with glorious death. Indeed, to die for their country appears to be the deepest passion of the Japanese heart. Strange instances that remind one of the spirit of Athens and Sparta have been quoted. I saw a letter of a Japanese mother to her son, a private soldier, which was found on his body after his death, bidding him go out and fight, and expressing a hope that he would *not* return. And yet they seem to have no belief in the continuance of identity; they look forwards confidently to entire annihilation. But it is not that deep fatalism which we are apt to attribute to Oriental nations that seems to give them courage; it is a passionate enthusiasm for national honour, a sense of duty which is not stoical, but vivid and vital, a patriotism that resembles a deep personal love, combined with a positive predilection for death, if only life can be given for their country's good. It is not the good of individuals, the welfare of the home, that seems to be in their thoughts, but a pure and absolute emotion for the idea of the nation, which we Englishmen, for all our boasted patriotism, are very far from emulating.' When

one reads of these splendid and inspiring instances of devotion, even such a phrase as "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" seems to be tainted by a kind of selfishness. The Japanese soldier will take the preservation of his country's honour in exchange for his soul, not merely resolutely and courageously, but with the sense that he is exchanging a very poor thing for a very great one. Even so holy and devout a spirit as Newman confesses that to save his own soul was his dearest pre-occupation. "Shall I be safe if I die to-night?" was the thought that drove him to sacrifice all he held most dear for the Church of Rome. One cannot help feeling that the Japanese spirit is a more divine thing than that, because the most divine thing in the world is the impulse which bids us sacrifice everything, not only peace and joy, but the very power that enables one to apprehend them, for the sake of a great idea. The Psalm gives us an excellent list of things which a man is to do—to chasten the tongue and to seek for peace—if *he loves life and would fain see good days*. But what if he would rather have his country great, not even knowing, as he lies asleep in death, whether she is great or no, than see any number of good days?

We are told that the Japanese arrive at this spirit by practising and inculcating, in schools and homes, a noble kind of chivalry, a knightly system. But where did the spirit come from that bade them do it, and that prepared their hearts to desire and follow it? How successful an experiment would it be, if we introduced such a system into our public schools? We get, it is true, a fine, generous, and uncomplaining temper among the best of our English boys, a spirit which makes them bear the hardships and sufferings of a long campaign with a blithe courage and a true simplicity; but the best that we can do is not comparable to what the Japanese can do. What we develop is a sense of honour, a sense of insouciance, a cheerfulness which tends to make the best of discomforts. But with all that there is in the hearts of our soldiers a deep desire to return home to those whom they love, to the familiar scenes, to the exercise of peaceful living; but the Japanese soldier lies down to sleep on the eve of action with the bright hope that on the next day he may be fortunate enough to give his life for his country. That hope consoles and invigorates his heart, just as the hope of a glorious return to home and life and love consoles and invigorates the hearts of our soldiers.

Surely this is a problem which our preachers, our moralists, our psychologists may well ponder—the possibility of educating the hearts of a nation into this supreme ardour for self-sacrifice and self-surrender. The best it seems that we can say is that self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control alone lead men to sovereign power. The Japanese soldier seems to feel that they can lead him to what is a better thing still—a glorious death, with no hope of a joyful resurrection. We may believe as Christians that our own is the truer point of view; but I cannot resist the thought that the other is the nobler, because it triumphs joyfully and blithely over the last enemy that is to be destroyed.

*August 8.*

The great danger for myself, as for other reflective people, is, I think, the tendency to live in memory rather than in the life of the present. Memory makes her pictures as a man may carve a statue; when it is done he sweeps away all the dust and chips, he puts away all the measuring-rods and tools, and the beautiful thing goes to be set in a gilded alcove in a palace corridor, with a crown of stars over its head. Memory does the same for one, all unconsciously,

with no effort of the will ; it sweeps aside all the dreary hours. Suffering has to be very sharp to be remembered, and very continuous to be remembered with a shudder ; but a single thrill of beauty in a dreary day, how the memory enshrines that !

I remember a heavy day a year ago ; I had to travel up to London on a business that was both anxious and wearisome, and I came away seeing no way out of the matter. About the time of sunset I passed a village in the train ; a little way off, across the misty water-meadows, stood an old church among great elm-trees. The trees were all dark and gloomy, beginning to lose their colour in the uncertain light, but the western side of the tower was lit up with a faint rosy radiance, the last glimmer of the sinking sun. I have often thought of that since, and always with a secret joy ; I have forgotten the dreary burden of the day,—at least the thought of it no longer weighs upon me with sadness,—yet the memory of the old tower, with the evening radiance, stays with me as a recollected delight. The old fables made the waters of Lethe, the stream of forgetfulness, flow between life and the happy fields of death, that a soul might drink and forget its sorrows ;



but the mind does that of itself, and the stream of memory is rather one of the rivers that make glad the city of God. One forgets one's own troubles and anxieties; one can forget one's own sins. What one cannot forget is the pain that one has inflicted on others, on those that have loved us, by unkindness and neglect. One sorrows over that with a fruitless sorrow; and the only cure for that would be to meet those dear ones, and to be forgiven with a smile.

Another strange temperamental thing is that one so soon wearies of pain and even of pleasure, but one does not weary of happiness. The longer it lasts, the more one grudges its ceasing.

These thoughts hold for me almost the surest hope of immortality that anything holds. We are made with so deep an instinct for happiness, so short a memory for pain, so faithful a love for those for whom we care, that it is harder for me to believe that we go down into silence and nothingness than it is to believe that we shall meet our dear ones, and that we shall inherit happiness—somewhere—far off; we seem so ready for happiness, whenever it is God's will that it shall begin.

I have sometimes thought that our life here is like one of those suspensions in music, which is

in itself a discord ; it is full of expectancy ; the spirit stands on the brink, waiting for the resolution ; and then it slides into the great sweet chord, the perfect harmony in which we rest.

*August 9.*

Perhaps it is true that a solitary man, who is neither father nor husband, and has thus missed touching life at its most vital point, does not understand quite what it is to be bound up with the world. But I do not think the paternal instinct is a very strong one. The love of a father for an infant child is a very complex emotion. I am not sure that a father does not love a child, when it is born, principally for its mother's sake ; also partly for the fact that the birth of a child perpetuates or tends to perpetuate the family, the stock—a species of pride which is by no means confined to the inheritors of property. In any case, the father's love for a child is of the nature rather of a mental process, and contains imaginative and moral elements. It is not a deep physical instinct, as it is with a mother ; it has nothing of the deep mystery, the exquisite yearning, the supreme joy which a mother feels in the case of a child. The emotion which a man feels at becoming a father is some-

times surprising in its strength, but it has a mixture of pride and compassion and responsibility about it, which is a very different thing from the intense, unreasoning, natural joy of the mother. I have sometimes thought that the reason why faith is an easier thing to a woman is because faith is so much bound up with love, that a woman, to whom love is a so much deeper and more vital necessity than to a man, has in her heart a kind of instinctive and unquestioning affection, which answers many questions which a man tries to decide by reason. To a woman her child is so much a part of herself that she loses that sense of isolated identity which a man is apt to feel; and thus a woman, with children of her own, craves less for assurance as to the continuation of identity, because she feels that, in a sense, she survives death, if her children live after her. A woman, too, is conscious of a direct union of life with her children, of a kind that a man does not instinctively feel. Love and marriage bring that sense of extended life nearer to a man than anything else, but it is still an imaginative rather than an instinctive process; and love being often, as it is, more a surprising episode in a man's life than a permanent atmosphere, when passion is over, the sense of solitary

identity is apt to recur again with fresh and intensified force.

The question then is, whether it is possible for a man to have a sense of direct union—by which I mean something much stronger than direct relation—with any other spirit, human or divine. Mystics of all ages have taught that this direct union is possible with God ; but I think it is true to say that, among mystics, women have had this experience oftener and with far greater force than men ; and the question comes in, whether it is not the translation of a human instinct, of the love which finds its normal satisfaction in husband and child—whether this vital instinct is not transferred by a certain imaginative power, however unconsciously exercised, to union with God. I mean that a woman, without lover or child, may yet be conscious of so imperious, so constraining a force of love for some unknown object, that she cannot believe that there is not some counterpart, some being that satisfies the hunger of the heart, that meets and returns the longing glance, the eager leaning-out of the spirit towards an unknown mate ; and that this instinct, finding no earthly satisfaction, centres itself on the power behind the world with a passionate anthropomorphism. It is one of those things that is

incapable of proof, because it is quite possible for a man to conceive an intense emotion for a thing that is a product of his own imagination. Even a human lover often credits the object of his affection with all kinds of qualities which have no real existence, and loves that object all the more fervently for qualities which exist only in his own imagination. In fact, it may be said that an intense love for anything does not prove the existence of the object of that love.

I have felt myself, as I have said, at times and for long periods together, this sense of a direct union with God; but it is not a permanent one; and it is this which sometimes makes me wonder whether it is really there, although it is accompanied by a confidence and a certitude which, at the time, seems to defy the utmost scepticism; it seems, when it is there, to be indubitable and real, with an intensity of reality that few things attain to; but then it leaves me, and I find myself wondering whether it is not some temporary harmony and balance of nature, some adjustment of physical and intellectual elements, that gives a sense of unison with the heart of the world.

But in any case, whatever my conditions may be, I may try to break through the close and

narrow fence that bounds my spirit. The real terrors of life, which lie behind all other terrors, are the loneliness in which so many of us seem to live, and the fear that we may cease to be. Other spirits seem, to our dulled and dimmed senses, to be wandering, as we wander, in the wilderness; over all seems to brood a vast power that bade us be, and that leaves us, not indeed ignorant of His existence, but able, it would appear, to live our isolated, self-absorbed life apart from Him. What we desire is to burst the crust that confines us, to be one with other hearts, to be one with the Eternal Heart, not merely to live out our little span of life within the narrow cell that bounds us. If we could but link our being to others, not by mere signals and gestures, by speech and glance, but by some vital interfusion of essence and identity; if we could feel ourselves one with God, and God one with us—nay, if we could even look forwards with a certain hope to the possibility of such union, there is no pain, no suffering which would not become bearable. It would endure but for a time; but the dark doubt that besets us is the doubt whether we are not condemned to this severe isolation of spirit, and whether this essence of self, which we feel thrilling and beating within

us, may not itself cease to be ; as the ripple, which stirs under the flying footsteps of the breeze on some silent lake, dies back into the liquid level, and is as though it has never been,—a mere con-course of atoms, a mere manifestation of some unheeding law.

*August 10.*

I am sure we are stronger in mind and spirit when we can once make up our mind to a frank recognition of evil in the world ; I do not mean by that that we may acquiesce in our own faults ; but we ought not to make a tragedy out of them, a hopeless agony ; one must rather regard evil as one regards a rainy day, cheerfully and sanely combating it ; just as a wise doctor wastes no time in commiserating a patient, does not pause to wonder why pain must be, but takes prompt and simple measures for its relief. It is no good blindfolding one's eyes, and trying to believe evil is not there ; in dealing with it in others, we must try to realise that it is often a perverted vigour, a misapplied force ; we must try to find a wholesome channel where that force may flow. In combating evil in ourselves, we ought to meet it patiently and quietly, in the moment ; not accumulating a horror of old and

frequent failures, nor anticipating an endless succession of temptations; we soon get to know our besetting faults; we must try to organise our lives so that the conditions of resistance may be as favourable as possible. We must try to deal with sin pathologically rather than emotionally; the thing to dread is a feeble drifting, a tame acquiescence in evil; so long as we are sure that we shall conquer if we have time enough, that is what matters. That is where very religious people make a mistake, in treating evil as a horrible thing intruded by the perversity of man into a perfectly benevolent and perfectly pure scheme. The instincts of self-preservation and of reproduction are at the bottom of most of our sins; and who will pretend that these instincts are not given us by God. He is behind evil as He is behind good. Christ, it seems to me, realised that, far more than most of His priests admit. He lived as simply, as tenderly with sinners as He did with righteous people; and He seems to have thought and taught that the danger of sin was nothing like so great as the danger of complacency; the people whom He recognised as His chosen flock were all those who had a passionate desire for goodness, peace, beauty, however foully and frequently they had



fallen; the only people whom He censured and condemned, with a bitterness that terrifies and appals, were the respectable people who despised sinners, and felt at ease in Zion. As long as the desire to be pure and true does not desert one, one is not lost; one need never despair over a fall; when one ought to despair is when one begins to approve of one's rectitude, to compare oneself favourably with others, to reckon up one's services to humanity.

There is a beautiful pair of old stories which hold in them a fine moral. There was once a bishop called Zachary Pearce; he held many preferments, and he was a highly respectable and virtuous man. When he lay dying he smiled to himself; one of those who stood by asked him what it was that brought him such a heavenly peace, and the good Bishop said tranquilly, "The consciousness of a well-spent life."

When the great Bishop Butler, a man of real devotion and self-denial, lay on his death-bed, he showed signs of grievous distress of mind. His chaplain, who was with him, seeing this, at last ventured to ask what was the cause of his sorrow. The Bishop, in broken accents, said that he had lived with a desire to serve

Christ, but now that he came to die he was troubled by a terrible fear. "I cannot believe," he said, "that He died for me." The chaplain felt bewildered, and unable to find any arguments that might console him; but instead of trying to remind him of all his unselfish labours, he merely quoted the verse, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out." The Bishop's look of pain faded away, and he died soon after, murmuring the words.

One would rather, I feel, weep like Butler than smile like Pearce; one would rather be burdened with a sense of failure, than courageous with a sense of success in that last sad hour.

*August 11.*

In these hot nights my window is left open, and as I lie awake I often wonder what can be the strange sounds I hear, sighs, far-off cries, noises as though things fell, musical notes, languid boomings. I suppose they all have some explanation, if one only knew. Many of them are probably very minute noises quite close to me, transformed in my restless brain to loud noises very remote. Last night I heard a burst of music—utterly inexplicable. If I were superstitious I might think it heralded my death, but

I do not believe that. Half the beauty of these sounds consists in the fancy, which compares and likens them to other sounds, and then calls up a scene to suit them. The firs in the garden murmur in the breeze of dawn like a falling sea; and then in my mind I see a golden sand, or a rock-cave with gem-like translucent water, emerald green, lapping softly against the precipitous ledges. Or there comes a faint sigh from the garden-alleys, and I think of some wandering woodland nymph, sorrowing for she knows not what, with her feet white on the turf, looking mournfully out of her dark eyes.

I do not seem to make these fancies; they come of themselves. They leave me wondering what the instinct for beauty is; because the thoughts that thrill one with a delicious joy, do not seem to deal with things which give one any material satisfaction. It is a desire which lies deeper than any hopes of comfort, ease, or bodily joy.

I saw last night the dawn come palely and tenderly flushing up the sky, so that the ridged cloud-rack looked like laminated pearl; below lay the quiet woods in a dewy peace. What bodily satisfaction could all that promise me? None! and yet it spoke to my weary mind like

a sweet and pure music, until I sank like a child into a happy languor of sleep that had so long delayed.

*August 13.*

It is odd, is it not, how, in dealing with the thought of death, the mind, in reverie, continues to consider pathetic and impressive the very points that are really so immaterial. One of the most heart-rending things I remember was when we had to dismantle the old Rectory, when my father died. He was a man of much method and preciseness, and he had a hundred little arrangements to provide against the most unlikely contingencies; stores of bits of string, and boxes which he never wanted, little "dodges," as he called them, for filing papers, classifying books, keeping gum moist, of which half the pleasure was in the ingenuity of the contrivance. All these little devices had to be broken up, papers torn down, books sold; the homely study in which he so delighted had to be stripped bare. I went about the sad work, feeling like a cruel traitor, choked with tears.

So, too, I reflect that if my own death had occurred in the little rooms in town where I have lived so long and so uncomfortably, and yet into every angle of which my spirit seems to have fitted

itself, as ivy grows over a wall—all this apparatus would have been ruthlessly cleared out and dispersed. Yet why should I care? If I live on in spirit, the one thing I shall have no heed of is the poor furniture that in life was gathered round my weak body; and if I do not survive, how much less will it matter? I wonder what is the tenderness that gathers thus about the old rooms, the familiar books, the well-known pictures? One gives a personality somehow to them all; and I feel that supposing that my spirit thus survives, and can take cognisance of earthly matters, I shall still grieve at seeing an old book that I have loved and marked, lying coverless in an ash-pit, or exposed for sale in a crowded book-shop. It is a false pathos, I am sure; and yet it is so deeply rooted in the human heart, this power of sweet and gentle attachment, that it is hard not to think that it means something, and is the symbol that there is something permanent to love, if only we could find out what it is.

*August 14.*

I suppose that it is the cessation of ordinary life, the confinement entailed by illness, that makes my thoughts dwell so persistently upon open air scenes of my past life that have been

familiar to me. What is strange is that the mind does not select memorable scenes to dwell upon, but the simplest, the most commonplace places, which I hardly knew indeed that I retained in my memory at all. All to-day I have been haunted, again and again, by the picture of a gate among quiet fields, on a low upland commanding a wide view of fen country. It was at a place where at one time I used often to go and shoot, which was extremely secluded; it was far from the highroad, and no track led through it.

I have seen the scene to-day as I used to see it after the harvest was over, with wide stretches of pale stubble here and there, a spinney splashed with autumn tints, the ashes showing blue-green among the other foliage. A grass-road, much ploughed up by the wheels of carts, led to the gate. I suppose I must have stood opposite to it out shooting on some occasion, but, as I say, I connect no incident with it, and I did not even know it lurked so faithfully in my mind. As I have seen it all to-day, it has been at the hour of sunset; there are large clouds in the sky, faintly tinted with a rosy light in the west. The gate stands open, and has a weary and expectant air, as though the homebound waggon,

piled high with sheaves, drawn by a clanking team, may soon be passing through. Very high in the air, winging its way slowly and intently, flies a solitary bird, a pigeon, steering for some well-known wood. This is always to me the symbol of utter restfulness, the weary bird, after its day-long wandering in wide fields, flying calmly home, through the last light, to roost in some familiar wood. It is a sweet allegory to me of the home-coming of the tired spirit, to rest all night in the tall dark tree, stirred by the cool breezes, while the darkness falls over the quiet fields. Am I too turning homewards as the shadow falls? I know not. But how blest should I be, if I could make my way home with that quiet confidence, that hope of rest, in the dying light! The sun sinks lower, the plain seems brimmed with mist; but still in my thought the rooks sail round and round above the tall elms of the Hall; the shadows lengthen; while still the solitary bird, high in heaven, among the rich radiance of the waning light, beats its patient wings, steering ever, by some faithful instinct, to the home of its rest.

*August 16 and 17.*

I have been haunted to-day with an odd persistency, because with no sense of volition, by the thought of a place that was very familiar to me a few years ago. This was a tract of moorland, covered with heather, gorse, and pale bent, close to the sea, in a remote part of Scotland ; from the edge of the moor, steep crags descended to the sea, which chafed loud on the rocky reefs and iron headlands. Where the crags were steepest, stood the weather-worn ruins of an ancient castle ; the walls were immensely thick ; the ledges grass-grown ; the sea-wind piped mournfully among the buttresses and broken windows. It was so old and rugged a place that it seemed rather carved out of the cliff than built upon it. The curlews used to breed on the moorland in great numbers, and the thought of the place brings back the melancholy and yet sweet note of that shy bird ; that cry, and the whisper of the pulsing sea below, falling at rhythmic intervals, after a suspended pause, on the boulders, were the only sounds audible there. A wide extent of sea was visible, like a floor of marble, streaked with strange lines and loops, and dappled with purple patches ; a few fishing-boats could be seen crawling slowly



on the wrinkled tide ; far to the west one could discern silent speeding sails, or the long trains of smoke of ocean steamers ; down on the sea's rim, on clear days, were the shadowy headlands and dim mountains of Ireland.

The place—desolate, wind-swept, and cold of hue as it was, except when flushed by the flower of the ling, or touched with golden light by the blooming of the gorse—had always a peculiar and mystical charm for me, a quiet loneliness, a stern tranquillity. There was nothing forbidding about its desolateness—it was rather pathetic and sad, uncheered by any brightness or richness of aspect, and yet with a brave and vigorous life of its own. The ruined stronghold gave it a human association ; one felt that a strong and stern life had been lived there ; one could imagine how the windows of the dark fortress must have glowed on winter nights with leaping fire and blazing torches.

It was a land rich in memories of ancient fights and warring chieftains ; it had doubtless seen strange and sad things, that black tower. One could imagine the return of some dispirited troop, with a horse led gently along, bearing a helpless swaying burden—the form of one who had ridden out blithely enough at daybreak ; one could picture the sad gazing of loving frightened eyes

from the high windows, hardly daring to surmise what had happened. It had been besieged too, that grim fastness, not once nor twice. The smoke had risen up from it, streaming landward in a heavy coil, the flames bursting from the parapets, while a train of despairing captives, men-at-arms going heavily, women dreading what might be, bewildered children, had been herded across the moorland tracks. Tender things, too, it had seen ; young love and bridal mirth ; it had echoed to childish voices, and had been beloved as a dear home by forgotten hearts.

It is strange what affinities certain places have for one's spirit. All to-day, as I sate and read and talked, I seemed to be threading the moorland, or sitting where, in the middle of the tract, a brown stream of hill-water ran hoarsely through a rocky gorge to the sea. How often, when the wind thundered in the crags, have I stood at the seaward end of the little gorge, to watch the falling water blown back upon the rock-face in spirts of dark foam. That bleak memory-haunted place often seemed to me like a parable of my own life, somewhat bare and homeless, windswept, and unvisited. Men's lives, as a rule, seem to me full of warmth and richness, like homesteads in comfortable pastures, sheltered with tall trees, musical with slow

streams. My own life has had a certain bareness and bleakness about it ; I have drawn near to many men, but close to none. I have somehow missed that rich inner sense of life inwoven with life, the sense of home and hearth. I have known what it is to be loved, but not what it is to be an essential part of others' lives. When I stood, as I stood a few weeks ago, on the threshold of the dark, this had a certain grim comfort about it. I did not feel the clinging of warm hands about me, whose clasp I dared not unloose ; and yet though that agony was spared me, I would have had it otherwise if I could. I would rather have sunk to my rest, trying to catch through dim eyes the last glimmer of love in faces that might have been a part of myself. The homelessness of the unknown land seemed bitterly present to me ; I would have wished to feel that I could have waited, in the dark land beyond, for those whom I loved to join me. I have loved this earth very tenderly ; I have loved trees and houses, fields and valleys, days of bright sunshine, fiery sunsets, days of weeping rain, with an almost passionate love—a love deeper and more intimate than I have given to my fellow-men. And thus I feel that, through my misfortune or my fault, I have somehow missed the best part of life. I have been in the

world, and not of it. And yet I feel—"These quivering heart-strings prove it," as the sad poet writes—that it need not have been so ; that hidden in the mist has moved one whom I could have loved ; and yet my life has been full of much happiness, and I am loth to leave the warm kind world. But now that I have returned from the dark threshold, I return with a hope that this nearer love may await me yet. Sharp and bitter as the suffering would have been, it is better to loose the trembling grasp of the hands that would detain us, and whose life is knit with ours, than to step in loneliness to the gate.

Even as I write, I return in thought to the wild moorland. I hear the wind whisper in the grass and the hidden voice of the sea. I hear again the faint crying of the curlews rising and dipping over the heather ; but it is to each other that they call. Each time that the faint note sounds they draw nearer, mate to mate. Would that my own sad voice could wake an answering call ! Even now they are sheltered together, bright eyes and warm plumes, through the dark hours of the night, till the grey morning wakes upon the moor, and the glowing sun casts a soft radiance upon crag and heather and dismantled walls.

*August 18.*

It was a delightful day when I could first crawl downstairs, and, propped up in curious tranquillity in a big armchair, could listen to some music. My sister is not a great performer, but she plays accurately and with quiet, delicate taste, simple old music—Scarlatti, Corelli, Bach. This is what I like best in my present mood. I do not think I could bear the great bewildering tender masters of later time, with all the sickness of the soul in their music. But these old gavottes and minuets bring a kind of sunshine into the air that darts to and fro, and enlivens the sombre day, as the warm firelight leaps on chair and wall. It makes me utterly and perfectly content, and gives me dreams of surpassing sweetness, heightening my quiet mood with a serene joy. The tripping notes, the gentle recurring phrases, the orderly processions, the perfect close, are like deep draughts of well-water to a thirsty man. Yet how utterly inexplicable it all is! How have these ordered vibrations of sound the power to move our hearts to an unreasoning joy, a heavenly mirth? Of all arts, music is by far the most mysterious, for it arouses no recollections, constructs no picture. It begins and ends with itself.

Yet these phrases are like living things, like the path of sparks upon the dark ; each with a perfect individuality, like quiring spirits. Let me be content with my joy ; let me not try thus to pierce behind the surface : and yet the very wonder of it is more than half the joy.

*August 19.*

I have been sitting out to-day on the lawn ; I am not yet allowed to walk, but I am carried out in a chair. I had rather a bad night last night, full of broken dreams. I saw and talked to multitudes of people. I wandered in prodigious landscapes, forest valleys with huge black mountains looking over. I saw a vast amber-coloured river, leagues wide, pouring steadily in a huge fall over a precipice into a narrow gorge. It fell with a majestic regularity, but in absolute silence. Very slowly my consciousness came back to me. The window of my room has a red blind over which curtains are draped ; but they do not quite meet at the top, and the result is that in the early morning the little gap looks like a red sword-blade. What a curious part that blade has played in my life for the last few months. When I have been ill and feverish, it has seemed to me like a fiery sword in the hand of an angel at an immense

distance. This morning I woke, wondering what it was, and then there darted into my mind a sudden joy, the joy of returning health. The waking hour is often to me a time of great melancholy and sadness. Mistakes seem irreparable then, hopes fade into ashes ; but to-day I simply lay in perfect peace and gladness, and the mood has been with me all day.

When I was moved into the garden it was the same ; I had no desire to read or talk. I simply looked and wondered. They had been mowing the little lawn, and there was a fragrant heap of grass beside me. The flowers and the trees were enchanting ; a crystal dew lay on the leaves, and the air blew cool out of the shrubbery, laden with the rich sweet smell of the earth. I have often wondered why that scent is so sweet. It is not a curious honied smell, like the smell of a flower ; it brings with it an aroma of dying leaf and decaying spray ; but it is enchantingly fresh and delicious. Can it be an old inheritance from savage ancestors—the scent of the woods in the morning, as some old half-barbarous forefather went out in his rough coat, hunting spear in hand, light of heart ? Some of our deep instincts come to us, I often feel, out of a very far-off time, and from very primeval conditions. The joy of sport,

of killing one's meat, for instance, is out of all proportion to the advantages which, in civilised days, result from the act. When one brings a partridge down with a clean shot, the satisfaction is absurdly in advance of the success. That is a very old joy, I am sure.

While I sate, a robin with a bright eye and a burnished breast came and hopped about me, ruffling his feathers, and now and then uttering a sharp brisk note. I suppose that it is only a stupid courage in reality that makes him so bold; but it was hard to think that he was not conscious of something of the loving admiration that I felt for the soft, alert, blithe little creature. I asked for some bread; rolled and flipped him a few pellets, which he took with a businesslike air, and flew off to discuss them at his ease in the laurustinus. My sister tells me that she is sure that the robins have carefully defined districts of their own, spheres of influence into which the others do not intrude. She walks along, and lures a robin by bread-crumbs into the next region; up to a certain point he is left unmolested; but when he once is past the borderline, out comes the next chieftain with feathers all on end, and chases the intruder away. That is the odd thing about these creatures; they



seem so strangely clever in certain directions, so strangely unintelligent in others. And then one cannot communicate with them in the least degree, beyond cultivating a certain fearlessness on their part; yet the affection one feels for them is a very real thing; though they cannot reciprocate it. People talk of animals as having no reason, nothing but blind instinct. They do reason, I am sure; but their mental processes are utterly unintelligible. Are they conscious, I wonder, of themselves and their identities, and their difference from other living beings? They know their own kind well enough and are at ease with them.

The life of a bird! Fancy the joy of being able at any moment to rise above the earth, to see it laid out like a map; to see the tops of trees which no other eye can see; to swing secure and undizzied, when the great green branching thing sways in the wind! It surely is the strangest thing that we men have discovered so many things that are so much more wonderful than mere flight, and yet seem to get no nearer to an art that is practised by millions of creatures round us, every day. The telegraph, the steam-engine, photography—if one had described such things to a Roman he would have laughed in

one's face; they would have seemed to him the idlest of silly tales; yet if a prophet had said to him that men would soon learn to fly like birds, that would not have seemed in the least incredible to him; the truth is that we do not, as we fondly think, advance where we will, but the very paths on which we advance are all laid out for us beforehand—we talk of discovering all these secrets, where our ancestors spoke of the revelation of God: and yet the revelation of these secrets of nature is a far more tremendous condescension, a far more close investigation of the mind of God than the ill-attested records of old miracles and signs. And yet we ponder over and discuss the old tales with deep concern, and take these new wonders with a stupid indifference. We are not so much wiser than the robins, after all!

*August 20.*

How strange, is it not, that the one part of death we are made by tradition and association to fear is the one part of it, the terrors of which are altogether empty and vain—the last sight of the stiffened form, the funeral pomp, the coffin with its terrible suggestive shape, the burial in the oozy clay, the emblems of mortality—the

sightless, grinning skull, the mouldering bone. With all these things at least the parting spirit has no concern, and yet we frighten ourselves with the thought that we too must suffer these ugly rites, so full of dismay. Looking back, through the years, I remember when the first sight of these things came into my life. It was when I was a child in the nursery; we were walking with our nurses, and saw a cavalcade of mourning coaches, a hearse adorned, as was the custom in those days, with two rows of black nodding plumes, drawn up at the door of a house—even while we passed, the polished coffin was brought awkwardly and horribly down the stairs, and thrust into the hearse. There was a little pale crowd of gazers assembled, with bare heads. The bereaved husband appeared at the door, his face full of grief. Then the procession, with mutes enveloped in long black-scarved hats, set slowly off. To the imagination of a child it was the most horrible pageant that could be devised. The crested horses, the black plumes on the hearse, that waved all together like a company of ghosts conversing, the dark coaches, with pale faces peering out, or with handkerchiefs pressed to their eyes—what wonder that it was for weeks a sickening nightmare and obsession.

These rites are utterly heathen and barbarous things, and we ought to banish them from among us. For children especially, at their impressionable age, they are a revolting cruelty. For them at least death should be veiled in the same mystery as birth. A child is brought into the world in stealth and privacy. Hardly a hint comes to the children of what is expected, till they are led in a joyful moment to see their new brother or sister, brought by the angels, or found dropped among the bushes of the garden. In some such, seemly mystery should death be concealed. Secretly and by stealth should the poor frame be taken from the house, reduced to ashes, buried with no concourse. The feeling that bids one take the last look of the beloved form, so terribly and sadly changed, frozen to a wax-like pallor, and follow the poor body to the grave is all a survival of barbarous times; it causes us to dwell on the sad accidents of mortality, on corruption and decay. It is not a true or a tender instinct. It drags us down to earth when we should be ascending to heaven; it keeps our affections hovering round the poor tenement of clay, till we turn from it in speechless horror and involuntary disgust. I would have all the incidents of burial made as private as possible; not till

the body was laid in the ground would I have any solemnity or function. And then I would have a service as beautiful and as hopeful as possible, with every incident that could remind one of death banished, with the mind beckoned and pointed rather to the thoughts of life and the mystery of the future. If I could please myself I would have my body taken up, just as it was, the moment I had ceased to breathe, and laid uncoffined and unadorned in the ground. It is the life and the spirit, the mind and the heart, we love, not the perishing frame.

There are stern and unfeeling natures who would say that it is well to impress the young and the thoughtless with the sight of death, the sense of mortality. Alas, it is only the morbid side of the imagination that is impressed. The active and healthy-minded child sees the sight with curiosity, and forgets it instantly. The sensitive child is endowed with a dark obsession. There is pain and sorrow enough in the world for us to spare investing death with grim terrors of our own. The very oppression of the darkened house in which the body lies is an added weight, a false and morbid shadow; its result is that, at the very time when we ought to be grieving as sincerely and tenderly as possible, speaking and

thinking as naturally and quietly as we can of the dear one we have lost, we are preoccupied with a throng of gloomy circumstances, of agitated arrangements, of trivial cares. All this is not true and wholesome grief, but a *macabre* sentiment, a difficult horror. Nothing that we can do can decrease or lighten the burden of death, but to trick the event out in dramatic trappings, to surround it with an appalling mummery, is surely unworthy of Christian hope and Christian joy. Both our imagination and our reasonableness are at fault; we treat the poor body with a false remorse, as though we were doing our dead friend a service, with an honour and a care which we often denied to him living. Instead of doing all we can to make ourselves and others realise that it is he no longer, but a mere worn-out vesture, to return to the dust of which it was moulded, we behave as if the poor frame was more himself than ever; we see that it is duly vested and lies softly. And yet, so deeply is the instinct implanted in most of us by long survival, that it defies reason and wisdom alike, and we tend to feel that the denying of the hideous solemnity to our friend would be a thing which he would somehow mutely resent, whereas there is hardly a living man or woman

who would not, if they could, spare their friends the sad wretchedness of the funeral. Even if a man of more kindness and fortitude than usual should leave directions that his burial should be swiftly proceeded with, and that he should be laid, as he died, in the earth, we should feel ourselves tenderly justified in arranging all otherwise.

Perhaps it is useless to hope that a custom so deeply rooted in the minds of humanity could be altered all at once; but we might, at least, resolve to spare children the terrors we so solemnly inflict upon them in the matter, and, instead of familiarising them with all the sad incidents of the grave, allow them to feel that death, like birth, is a tender secret, and that a human being leaves the world as mysteriously as he enters it.

*August 21.*

One of the strange things about our view of the future life and of our relations on the other side of death, with others, even with those whom we have loved on earth, is the feeling that we have of the change that will pass over them when they have entered the world of light. It seems a species of treason to think of any one

as ill-tempered, mean, selfish, or grotesque in the after life, however constantly and strongly they may have exhibited those characteristics here; and yet we love people in their entirety here; why should we think of them as divested of their individuality there? We feel, I suppose, that death must be a great enlightener. We imagine vaguely that a person after death, given that identity endures, will understand things perfectly, will see things clearly, and that the inevitable result will be a kind of serene balance of soul. I think it is a misfortune of our mundane religious system that we grow to imagine that persons of an ecclesiastical type of sanctity, of a certain definite species of piety, are dearer and nearer to God than secular persons. It is, indeed, sometimes so; the virtues of generosity, ardour, sympathy, loving-kindness do, indeed, often blossom and bear fruit in ecclesiastical persons; but such persons have no monopoly of these qualities. And there are also faults of the ecclesiastical temperament, such as spiritual complacency, narrowness of judgment, a tendency to condemn all whose beliefs deviate from their own—such faults, indeed, as are patently displayed in the lives of typical priests, men of great personal purity, combined with a really



appalling uncharitableness, faults which one cannot help feeling, if one reads the Gospel candidly, are far more repugnant, if one may use the words, to the spirit of Christ than even more gross sins. A man of base animal appetites may be converted, may grow to be ashamed of his sensuality, but a self-satisfied man, who is perfectly assured that he can interpret correctly the mind of God, can hardly be converted by any agency whatever.

Perhaps it may be true that faults which are connected with our bodily natures may be to a certain extent extinguished by death, but I can only say frankly that it would be a great disappointment to me if I thought that the individualities of those I have known and loved, and even of those whom I have known and disliked, were to be flattened out by death. I remember talking once to a friend who had been a very devoted son to a widowed mother, who lived to a great age. She was an acute, shrewd, incisive, determined old lady, full of brisk and even unjust judgments, brimming over with delightful prejudices, brave, loyal, and independent. After her death, her son, who, I may say, had lived much with his mother, and had never failed to write to her every day that he had been absent from her,

since the day that he first left home for school, came down to see me in a condition of overwhelming and despairing grief. "I shall meet her again," he said. "I don't doubt that, but my friends say that I must think of her as glorified, sanctified, made perfect. I don't want her to be made perfect; I want her exactly as she was, with all her faults and foibles."

That is the truth; we do not want our friends to be levelled and smoothed out by death, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. I do hope that the next world may perhaps be free from some of the things that pollute and poison this. I hope that filthiness and cruelty, malignity and spite, meanness and hatred may be diminished in the world of light; but the essential differences of human beings, the differences that lie deeper than circumstances or education or environment, and which these agencies seem unable to modify—these, I believe, will be preserved, if the spirit is preserved at all. The ordinary conventional person would think it a kind of profanity to believe that humour will continue to exist in heaven, as, for the sake of convenience, I will call the after-life. If it does not, heaven will be a very dull place; and one of the reasons why the ordinary idea of heaven

is so unutterably dreary, is because all the things that are the spice of life, and that give it savour, are, as a rule, so carefully abstracted by pious people from their imaginary descriptions of that celestial place. The old idea of heaven as a place where the only occupation will be a perpetual full choral service is fortunately extinct. We are allowed to think of it as a place where we shall be able, perhaps, to be happy in the best way; but it is still overshadowed by a false atmosphere of piety and sanctity, a stifling air in which the natural man feels that it will be hard to breathe. As long as religion remains a monopoly in the hands of ecclesiastical persons, this is inevitable, and the sooner that religion ceases to be an ecclesiastical thing the better. I have myself a great affection and admiration for a large number of clergymen. Some of my best and dearest friends are in that profession; but for all that I should be sorry to have to think that after-existence was going, so to speak, to be run on purely clerical lines.

*August 22.*

It may be said that it is useless to lose oneself in these uneasy reveries; that one gets no further, indeed, that one grows more and more ineffec-

tive, palsied with the malady of thought. "Go straight on," says the robust man, "work, enjoy, live, do your duty, bear, act." Yes, it is excellent advice; these darker thoughts may be but a disease; still, no one would ever think of telling a man in a fever that it was of no use to be ill. He knows that even better than his healthy mentor, and the cause of his affliction is inconceivable to him. "Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain," says the Psalm. Yes, but does one disquiet oneself? No one would do it willingly. There is no temptation to do it. But if one cannot avoid it, if one is brought face to face with these thoughts, no solution results from trying to believe that they are not there. The only hope is to gaze steadily through them, and to try and see a hint of brightness beyond.

*August 24.*

I sate to-day in a sheltered arbour in the garden, approached by a little avenue of old lime-trees, that looks over the churchyard. There was to be a funeral this afternoon, I knew, of a simple, aged cottager's wife, whose pleasant wrinkled face had often smiled & greeting to me from her little door. She was old, and

had seen many things, both grief and joy, pain and pleasure ; she had lived a very quiet laborious life, had seen her children grow up, then her grandchildren. She had had few thoughts of herself, and her large heart had room for all about her. She loved her home, the quiet routine of daily life, and had preserved her powers intact to a great age, together with a serene tranquillity of mind which was reflected in her old worn face, on which the sleeping smile broke often into life. She had no warning of her end, and died suddenly one evening, without pain, sitting in her chair, having discharged all her daily labours as she was used to do.

I saw the little procession draw near, the bell tolling softly in the tower. Almost the whole village came to the funeral, mourning for her as for a mother ; the day itself was like the life she had lived—calm, cool, and still, full of kindly sun and bright air. I could hear from where I sate the words, “I am the Resurrection and the Life,” which I can never hear without a throb of uncontrollable emotion. At last they came to the grave ; the body was committed to the dust ; the crowd slowly dispersed, and through the calm afternoon I could hear the clink of the shovel, and the earth falling, falling, till the grave was filled.

It was inexpressibly sad to think of the gap caused by the ending of so sweet and loving a life. She had been one of those to whom old and young alike instinctively bring their troubles, though she was a woman of very few words; but she listened with her whole heart, and the tears that filled her old eyes, through which she gazed with perfect understanding upon her confidant, had brought healing to many a sore heart. She never speculated about life, only met it humbly and joyfully, loving and trusting God with a pure and glad instinct that made all things plain. If all lives were such as this, there would be little room for doubt or wonder; death would seem as sweet and natural a thing as the fading and falling of the autumn leaf; and yet the very dearness of that aged, loving spirit, the perfect sweetness of her childlike smile, leaves a bitter legacy of sorrow to all that knew her. Is it possible that we are not meant to grieve? Surely the very hiding of the secret, on a day like this, when there is peace and sweetness in heaven and earth, must contain some ineffable treasure of love and beauty, if we could but lay a hand upon it.

And to me there comes the strange, and bewildering thought that, had the issues of death

and life gone otherwise, this very day might have seen my own mortal frame laid to rest in the same place, with something of the same concurrence. Not, alas, that I should have been mourned so sincerely, so bitterly. The sorrow that I have seen to-day written legibly in the faces, the gestures of the throng, is a purer, an intenser sorrow than any sorrow which would have attended me to my last rest. Such sorrow seems the sign of the one thing worth living for, and yet to be the gift of God, not to be attained with careful striving. God send us patience and faith, and, though we know not, the heart to live as though we knew.

*August 25 and 26.*

There is one curious little delusion that torments me in these days of enforced leisure. It has only lately been revealed to me what a delusion it is, but the persistency with which it recurs to me shows how strong a thing habit is, and how habit seems able to defy reason.

The delusion is that I am so useless under present circumstances. One's belief in one's usefulness, one's significance in the scheme of things, is incredibly strong; it is rather a blessed delusion after all, and preserves one's self-

respect. When I am in town, hard at work, I tear myself away from the morning paper, and sit down to my task with a sigh of virtuous self-sacrifice; and yet what is it that I do? I write a book or an article, which is perhaps read by a few hundred leisurely people. If I did not write my book or my article, I cannot really flatter myself that any one would be the loser. Then I answer my letters scrupulously and lengthily; but I do not know that the world would be the poorer if I did not.

Of course, there are some professions where one need not be in any doubt as to the usefulness of what one is doing. Clergymen, doctors, teachers, merchants—these are obviously useful persons; and all the people who do the necessary work of the world—producers of needful commodities, labourers, servants, railway-men, fishermen; there can be no question about the usefulness of their work. But we artists, however strong our sense of vocation may be, what do we do but to amuse and entertain? The most we can hope to do is to help people along the road a little, to beguile the time innocently, to feed men's sense of what is beautiful and hopeful.

Of course, that is a false way of looking at it after all. Men's lives cannot be spent entirely in



useful labour ; their leisure hours must be filled as wholesomely as possible ; and thus the work of the artist is needed : any one who supplies a legitimate demand is honestly employed.

What we ought to do is not to think of our personal significance at all ; we ought to feel that we have a bit of work given us, and we ought simply to take care that it is as good in quality as we can make it. Where we go wrong is in hankering after recognition and admiration—that is the temptation of the artist.

I have been thinking about my friends and the value of their work. Certainly it is not those that are busiest who are best employed. Two of the most useful people in the world that I know are people of leisure. One is an elderly lady who lives in the country and has no particular duties. But she is a woman of great intellectual force, with a poetical and deeply religious mind ; her talk, her letters are extraordinarily suggestive. The result is, that every one who is brought into contact with her, goes away with a heightened sense of the significance and interest of life. She is always ready to consider other people's problems, and does it with a zest and a sympathy that makes it a pleasure to consult her, because you feel that she is instantly and generously

interested in the case, and does her best to disentangle a situation. The result is that she holds the threads of many lives in her hands, and yet I have often heard her say with sad humility that she is a very useless person ; but she discharges for all that the work of a priestess and, in a sense, of a prophetess. Life and the issues of life are to her intensely fascinating subjects of thought : you leave her presence feeling that your own existence is an infinitely beautiful and important thing ; she suggests motives, she kindles one with a desire to act worthily, she gives a savour to life, she is indeed, what Christ told His disciples to be, the salt of the world.

The other friend who comes to my mind is the parson of a small country parish ; he does nothing in particular ; he hunts and shoots ; but he brings into every society a simple and tolerant good-humour ; he enjoys life keenly, he loves his fellow-men. He is the trusted friend of every soul in his parish, and one sees the face of every one to whom he speaks, light up at his greeting. The fact that he is in the middle of his flock gives them a sense of real security. If they want to see him, he is always at leisure. In grief and trouble he somehow contrives to straighten out a problem, to give it a hopeful or a beautiful air ;

he gathers up the fragments with a careful hand, and shows how much is left. He is not in the least an intellectual person. I do not suppose he ever opens a book—but he is full of shrewdness, humour, and benevolence. He considers himself an indolent man; because all the friendly offices he performs for his neighbours do not appear to him in the light of work, but as things which he does because he likes doing them.

These two, and I only wish there were more like them, by being at leisure to be kind, by having a deep and instinctive interest in human beings, contrive to do a work, without preoccupation and without friction, which reduces the labours of busy, fussy people to insignificance.

That is the temptation of work, to sacrifice kindly and generous intercourse with others to it. Yet it is just this other kind of work that I believe Christ intended His followers to perform. He Himself moved a man among men, neither lingering nor making haste, talking, consoling, enlightening. He did not fling Himself into any occupation, or preach that men should thus employ themselves. He rather indicated that life should be lived on the simplest lines; and if we were only content to do that, what a network of small social chains and ties would be immediately unloosed!

What these weeks of enforced inactivity have shown me is, that we are, many of us, too much inclined to think that our business is to teach, to instruct, to guide. God, it seems, has laid a quiet hand on my shoulder, and bids me simply be a learner for a while in the school of patience and kindness. I have been, I see, too much absorbed in trying to create, to give out, to utter ; and now I am ordered, for a time at least, to meditate, to receive, to learn. These silent hours, when I can do nothing but just look about me, reflect, talk, have a beautiful meaning for me, I doubt not. I try not to be querulous, not to complain of my limitations, not to be fretful ; I try to make it as much a pleasure as I can for any one who comes to see me to be with me. I try to amuse the children, to listen to what they are doing and thinking about ; I ask questions about the people of the parish ; I try to understand and sympathise. I am only too conscious that I do not do it well—that I am self-absorbed, preoccupied, uneasy, in spite of my efforts. But I have learnt some patience, some sympathy, and, above all, I have learnt to realise that we ought not to be always trying to point out things to other people, but to let God point them out to us. I have learnt that one perceives things by

resting, in a way in which one does not always perceive them by working. I have learnt that such hours as these fill up and replenish the fountains of the soul, as the spring in the valley is fed by the rain that falls upon the hill. God has been very good in not sending me suffering to any extent ; but He has revealed to me the truth that "they also serve, who only stand and wait," and that in all sad lives, lived some of them from birth to death under the same conditions of enforced inactivity and invalid life, there may be a gain of tenderness, of quietness, of sweetness, which may overflow in unseen and unexpected ways into other lives. And even if it seems to such sufferers that they can effect nothing, can only be burdensome to others and dreary to themselves, they may at least approach closer to the great truth, that we are more likely to draw near to God in helplessness and humility, than when we stride abroad in our pride. Like Saul in the ancient story, we may embark upon the sordid and tedious task of searching for the strayed beasts of burden, and may find a kingdom by the way.

*August 27.*

I sit here day after day in the garden, content just to look about me and wonder. There is a disreputable old man who comes in to help the gardener; he is not a nice old man to look at; he is not nice in any way. He used to drink; he treated his wife cruelly; his son ran away from home and has disappeared; his daughter came to hopeless grief, and returned to find her mother dead and her father out of work; he has lost several places, partly through drunkenness, and partly through mere laziness. Frank, who is the kindest of men, insists upon employing him in the garden, though he does no work except under supervision, and though it is practically certain that he conveys away vegetables under his coat. He is a dirty and shabby old wretch, with bleared eyes and a red nose; he has a shy and obsequious manner to those above him, but he leads his miserable daughter a wretched life, never ceasing to taunt her with her fall from virtue; yet he talks very sanctimoniously, as though he was an afflicted saint.

The thought of this old man distresses me; it is so hard to see why an almighty and benevolent God should have created and preserved

a being like this, who has no self-respect, and sets a bad example in every way; his only use in the place, indeed, seems to be to provide a melancholy instance of the unhappiness which results from following one's own inclination. It is true that he has never had a chance, as we lightly say; his father and mother were both drunkards, and he was brought up in a most wretched home. It is impossible to imagine him under what may be called spiritual conditions. His idea of happiness is to fill his poor body with drink, stagger home to beat his daughter, and to sleep it off. I suppose, too, that he has a mild sense of pleasure when, after scamping his work, for which he is grossly overpaid, he manages to defraud Frank of a few potatoes or apples. It is quite beyond my powers of conception to forecast what will become of this mean and sensual old spirit, when it quits the battered tenement of the body which he has so vilely abused. I do not think he has any particular wish to be different, and it is difficult for me to think of him as one of the ransomed of the Lord who will return and come to Zion. Perhaps I am judging him as the Pharisee judged the publican; I am afraid I thank God that I am not as this old man; and yet it is with deep

compassion and not disdain that I contemplate him, because I do not see that I could have done better if I had been born under the same circumstances. Has he indeed, inside the wretched cage of bone and flesh, a spirit that can soar to worlds unknown? will he look back upon his life here like a dark nightmare? will the misery and uncleanness and meanness of his life here give him a heightened joy hereafter? If God is all that we believe Him to be, all brightness and peace and holiness, with what thoughts does He survey this pitiful life? It is impossible to resist the thought that God might have done better for this old man than He has done. Men have been born under worse conditions than this, who have lived soberly and honestly; but this man has never had any sense of shame; he has just obeyed the impulses with which he is endowed, and even Frank, who is the most charitable man I know, says candidly that he never saw a man so entirely unable to see or feel that he has ever done wrong. Judged by all the canons of beauty and goodness, the man is a failure, and an offensive failure. If hereafter he can be brought to a sense of his hopeless condition, why should he have gone through the world without a single inkling of the fact? His entire



self-satisfaction is the gloomiest part of the whole situation.

He suspends his work, and comes up to me simply in order to waste a little time. There is no one of my senses that he does not displease. He tells me that he is suffering from rheumatism, that he has a very hard time; he will say nothing against any one, but he has been hardly used; a gentleman like me would hardly think how difficult it is for a poor man to get on. He ends by making a subservient suggestion that I may perhaps have a shilling to spare; he is so glad to see me getting better; my accident was a sad business.

At this point he is called away to attend to his work by the gardener; he touches his old hat demurely, and goes off with a disagreeable smile. I confess that such a man is a hard trial of faith. There seems something radically wrong in a world which can nurture and guard so dismal a figure in the ways of sordid evil. He breaks, this deplorable old man, upon my pilgrimage, as the three ill-favoured ones broke upon Christian. And yet they too had in their hearts a thought of pilgrimage. The brave Christian had no misgivings. He rejoiced to see them led into a hole on the hill-side, a trap-door belching

smoke. Perhaps if I were surer of my way I should rejoice too, but I cannot; I would rather see my poor companion aroused and awakened, clad in white raiment; I would like to see him pass in shrinking faith through the dark water, and hear the trumpets sound for him upon the other side.

*August 28.*

I go sometimes, on hot afternoons, and sit quietly in the church. It is very cool and fragrant in there, and a quiet peace seems to settle down on the spirit. I like the ancient arches, with all the irregular grace of antiquity about them, the dusky roof with its dark beams, the dimness of the chancel, the silent altar. The church is rich in old monuments. There is a fine Jacobean tomb, railed off at the end of the aisle. Under a marble arch, covered with little emblems—Time resting on his scythe, a skeleton turning an hour-glass in his hands, Grief dissolved in tears, an Angel with a golden trumpet—kneel the figures of three persons. The one to the left is an old physician, in black gown, ruff and skull-cap—*Aesculapius alter*—says the quaint inscription. Next to him kneels his son, a flourishing, rosy-cheeked knight, with a black

moustache and imperial, in armour, such a cheerful fellow! Then kneels the Doctor's old wife, with a good, wrinkled face lowered in prayer. Underneath, extended at full length, lies the knight's lady, a pretty Puritan dame, with a smiling countenance, with white shapely hands, and tiny feet in high-heeled shoes peeping modestly from her gown. They look so united, so loving a party. They lived happily at the dismantled manor-house near the church. But sitting, as I do for an hour to watch them, I seem to have become almost a friend, and to have been admitted into the loving compact. The knight died more than two hundred years ago, and his wife did not long survive him. They lived, I think, very kind and honourable lives—they were great benefactors to this place; the blessing of children was denied them. I find myself filled with a tender curiosity as to how the years have passed since with them. Are they together again? Are they conscious of the old loves, the old nearness? Their bones are mouldering into dust in the vault beneath, the very bones that bore them about the fields in which I tread. Is it not possible to have some intuition of the grievous mystery? Why have I so passionate a desire to know, to have an ever so faintly

glimmering hope as to the dark hereafter? For if there be none, then one should live as cautiously, as circumspectly as possible, husbanding one's taste of joy and light; yet even as that thought rises, it is checked by a deeper thought, that seems to say that there is something nobler than that. I find it hard to believe that if one knew that life and identity continued, and that love endured, one would not more resolutely try to lavish love and care on others. But I suppose that I too have Moses and the prophets, if I will but hear them! And if it be true that self-sacrifice is the one precious thing, and love the thing that most endures, why am I so bound about by these mortal, material desires and designs, so urgent, so absorbing, so dear? What of my ambitions, my restless labours, my longing for beauty? Are these things in vain? Why am I kept thus lingering, in tremulous incertitude, the prey of a hundred fancies, loving my toys, like a blithe child? If I but knew which of my hopes were the choice of God, could they not also become my choice? If I could but, like Christian from the Hill Beulah, even faintly discern through the perspective-glass, with hands tremulous for joy, something of the glory of the place, should

I not betake myself with a light heart to my pilgrimage? But my perspective-glass shows me a thousand blurred outlines, all wonderful, not all joyful. If God desires me to be hopeful, why does He send me so much that makes me despair? If He would have me brave, why is the world so full of fears?

*August 29.*

How strange a thing it is that what we fear more than anything else in the world is the being left alone with ourselves. It is the one thing which we cannot bear; we try to absorb ourselves in thought and action; and we count those hours the happiest which have passed swiftly and unconsciously. What it seems we cannot tolerate is to sit alone with our own spirits. There seems to be hardly anything more insupportable than to be conscious that our minds are alert and active, and to be debarred from employing them. It generates a kind of poisonous fever of the spirit. We thrust ourselves back upon reminiscence, or we project our restless spirit into the future; what we cannot bear is the silent inactive present.

I wonder if we ought to try and train ourselves more to live in quiet contemplation; the sad thing

is that our heart seems to have nothing to say, unless it is concerned with something outside of itself. It seems to have no consciousness of itself, unless it is dealing with things that are not itself. Here seems to lie the essential difference between the Eastern and the Western mind. The Eastern temperament seems able to exist in a passionless contemplation of its own essence; the Western mind exists only in strong external impressions. We are apt to talk about the spiritual life; but what does the phrase mean upon our lips? Our whole preoccupation appears to be the desire to become different from what we are; to grow in experience and knowledge, to explore, to find, to realise. We are not content to be; we desire to possess, and yet we are never contented with what we have gained. Perhaps if we dared to lean out more from our towers of thought, to listen to the silence of heaven, we should find the very things of which we are in search. It seems that we cannot let thought flow into the mind; we must go out to meet it, we must drag it in, as a man drags in a net full of shining fish. Hence comes our sad disillusionment, our restless pain, our divided aims. Our prayer is too often, "Teach me to *do* the thing that pleases Thee." It is better to say, "Give me Thyself." •

*August 30.*

Our dread of solitude, of isolation, the difficulty one has in employing one's mind at all when one is without definite resources, are in a sense indications of the continuation of identity and of relations with others after death. If, that is to say, we feel that life is so incomplete, so unequal a thing, that it needs a sequel to give it significance at all, then we must surely feel that relations with other souls must be an essential part of the after-life. It cannot be said to amount to a proof; the most that we can say is that life, as it is constituted, would be unintelligible without futurity. Moreover, the soul, separated from its mental consciousness, may be a thing of so inconceivable a quality, that its needs and its desires may be altogether different from anything we can picture with the intellectual perception.

Left to itself, the mind seems to defy the will, and to wander on its own chosen track. One becomes conscious of a strange duality; the will, like a feeble charioteer, seeking to control the memory and the imagination, restive steeds, and finding itself unequal to the task. The will says, "I will follow out a definite argument; I

will make a precise subject as clear as I can." The mind seems to say, "No, I will run vaguely to and fro between the future and the past. I will live in the memories of the things that have been; I will paint pictures of what is to be." It is in vain that the will decides that this is a futile, an enervating business, and that it desires to follow a particular line of thought. The mind refuses to be bound, and, like a whimsical child, interrupts the course of thought with fanciful images, bizarre details. It recalls the features, the very clothes of some person long since dead; it revives forgotten incidents, or it harps upon some petty hope, draws an elaborate design of future employment, future enjoyment. I, who have written much, find it easy enough to pursue a definite train of thought with a pen in my hand. It acts as a tiny anchor, which binds the wandering vessel to a fixed place. Perhaps one might have trained the mind to sedate habits; but there is so little experience in ordinary life which assists a habit of settled contemplation. And thus, in vacant hours, the mind becomes a torture to itself; it rolls and turns to and fro in aching misery. But the moment that one has the company of another human being, all this is at an end. The torture of the lonely



mind is that it asks questions of itself, and cannot answer them; it misses the contrast, the interacting influence of another thought.

This fibre of sociability seems so interwoven with our natural constitution that, as Bacon says, only the very wise and the very brutish can dare to seek solitude.

Perhaps if we are to grow hereafter in wisdom, we may grow more content with solitude. But probably there would be no doom, the imagination of which would inspire a human being with a deeper extremity of terror, than the thought of an everlasting solitude to succeed death, a solitude in which to all eternity we could never hope to find oneself in relations with a kindred being again, never learn another's feeling, never compare experiences, never have the comforting thought of the proximity of one like oneself. The thought is indeed so insupportable that there is hardly any fate that one would not choose, if only that fate could be shared by another.

I think that this instinct is perhaps the very deepest of all; and if we are to trust instinct as a guide to the nature of after-existence, we can affirm that it will be at all events spent in relations with similar yet distinct individualities.

And if we can affirm, or at all events believe that, does not the hope come home to us with a deep conviction that we shall share our experience, whatever it may be, with those whom we have learned to love on earth, even though we may also share it—a joyful thought—with spirits whom we have learnt to love and admire through art, through books, through the records of history; congenial spirits whom we were born too early or too late to know? A beautiful dream perhaps! But it is something more than a dream.

*August 31.*

How the mystery presses upon one at times! Near my window grows a big yew-tree, the chosen roost of a fat and merry thrush of my acquaintance, who has done his best in the weary days of my illness to enliven me with his brave rich song. At morning and at night-fall he used to sit on a high branch, his little throat swelling, meditating his strain, as the old poets said, repeating a pretty phrase twice or thrice, as though he was studying the effect. Some of his liquid tunes I came to know by heart. Of late he has seemed out of spirits. He deserted the high bough, and I used to see him sit darkling, as Milton says, in the

heart of the bush, sometimes uttering a faltering note.

Yesterday his poor wasted body lay on the grass, his speckled breast upturned, his tiny claws upheld, his bright eye glazed. I meant to ask the children to give my little friend a burial, and hide in the enfolding earth the heart so full of song. But the jackdaws, those decent, grave, scavengers of the garden, who build in the church tower, found him out; plucked him relentlessly, and ate as much as they could of the small body. I did not disturb them at their ghoulish trade. Why should I deprive them of an honest meal? But when they were satisfied, I asked my nephew to bury the poor remains, which the children did faithfully, and enjoyed the pomp immensely, devoting an old cigar-box to the purpose.

But I am sorry my little friend is gone, and cannot help wondering what has become of the simple and bright spirit, so clearly defined, so happy, that has slipped away from the tiny body, so daintily made.

Is this pure sentiment? I suppose so; and yet the case of the thrush, his beautiful little life, from the day that he broke out of the speckled egg and met the light of the sun, till the evening when he reeled dizzily off his branch and fell

fluttering to the ground, holds within it a host of strange secrets, the meaning of all of which are hidden from my wondering heart. Why should I have loved the pretty bird? Why should I miss him from the dark tree? The strange thing, that I cannot penetrate, is why I should have the desire to concern myself with him at all.

*September 1 and 2.*

The children here are a great delight to me. For a long time I was not allowed to see them; then at last they were admitted to visit me. My nephew, Jack, aged nine, is a cheerful matter-of-fact young gentleman; and, like other cheerful gentlemen of more advanced age, he is ill at ease in a sick-room. I sympathise with him so strongly that I should entirely understand it if he made excuses for not entering my presence; but he is an affectionate boy, and has already a certain sturdy instinct for doing his duty; so he pays me a solemn visit every day; and I am aware that he has always prepared beforehand some subject of conversation which he thinks suitable to my secluded condition. Indeed, I hear from my sister that he consults her at intervals, "What shall I talk to uncle about

to-day?" But my niece Marjory is quite different. She is eleven years old, and she has the sweet tenderness of a woman already in her heart: that any one should be ill and helpless makes a direct appeal to her. I am interesting and dear to her in a way that I have never been before; because she can help, can give something of herself. The difference between the masculine and feminine temperament is a very strange thing. To a boy, even to an unmarried man, a baby is a curious and rather disagreeable object; a thing to be kept in a good humour, but to be banished as far as possible to upper rooms and perambulators. But to a girl, a baby in its most helpless, inarticulate and bubbling stage is an idol to worship, an object of wonder and delight. My niece Marjory has found out that I like to have her with me. She is constantly in and out of the room. She delights in doing little things for me; or she sits quietly, the hair falling over her pale smooth cheek, reading, working, but ever watchful. She is a beautiful child, with large grave eyes, full of thought, full of dreams. I do not think I ever realised before what an incomparably beautiful thing the stainless loving mind of a child like this is. She is a perfectly

natural, happy, lively creature, full of interests and little excitements. The world is a place of delicious surprises to her; but the intensity of her affections is a thing which, remembering my own self-absorbed unloving boyhood, is a perpetual wonder to me. I recognised with a proud and happy thrill of the heart, the first time that I was allowed to see her, how large a share of that simple and generous love she lavished even on me. I knew in a way that the children liked me; but Jack's anxiety about me in my illness had been partly that he was sorry that one who had been kind to him should suffer, partly a kind of uneasy dislike of the shadow cast over the house. But with Marjory it was different. I saw in her smiles, her hardly repressed tears, that it had been a real and passionate grief to the child that I should have been so near death; and in that moment a secret compact seems to have been sealed between us, that will last, I feel, as long as I live. One does not blame or praise these feelings or this absence of feeling in children, because it is so purely instinctive a thing; but there is a holiness, an awe about thus possessing the love of a child, which gives me a sense of the nearness and the love of God, when one

sees a force so deep and sweet thus implanted by Him. \*

Marjory is a clever child too, and reflective beyond her years. One day she was writing in a little paper book in my room. I asked what it was all about. She blushed, and was at first unwilling to tell me. At last it came out. She told me that she loved her mother more than any one in the world, and that her mother seemed to understand all that she wanted better than any one. "But sometimes," she said, "she does not seem *quite* to understand; and I think that she is so much older that she has forgotten perhaps what she thought when she was a little girl; so I am putting down in my book exactly what I think, so that when I grow up and perhaps have a little girl of my own, I may be able to look in my book and see what I thought, in case I have forgotten." I should have liked to have read the little book, but she did not offer to show it me; and I felt somehow that it was too intimate a thing to ask to see.

One day I had been reading a book about some prehistorical remains, some old tombs and subterranean dwellings that had recently been explored in the neighbourhood. I showed Mar-

jory the pictures, and explained them as she sate by me, her hair brushing her cheek, her hand in mine. She asked if she might read the book, and I told her she would find it dull. But for all that she wished to read it. The next day I looked up while she was reading, and saw that she was crying. I asked her what was the matter, and for a time she could not tell me; but little by little it came out. It was nothing but the thought of these old, sad, helpless, half-savage people, dead and gone, with no one to think of or pity them; their little dark houses dug up, their poor graves disturbed. They had found the ashes of a child in a tiny urn; and the thought of this had been unspeakably sad to Marjory, with the brightness of life all about her. I cannot say how this moved me; and I am afraid I even cried myself, not so much at the thought of the old dead folk, though that was sad enough, but at the wonderful tenderness and sweetness of the heart of a child who could thus sorrow over those she had never seen, depicted so drily in this scientific antiquarian book. It was like violets blossoming above the narrow graves, and drawing their sweetness from the crumbling ashes. I shall never forget Marjory's tears, and



the smile that came at the thought, which I made for her, that they were perhaps all together now, and smiling themselves at the thought of the old uncomfortable life, and at the puzzle that their simple arrangements were to learned folk.

But ah, dear Marjory, there remains your loving thought of those strange ancient beings, who would have terrified and bewildered you if you had seen them in the body, and who would perhaps have thought of you, fair-skinned and long-haired, as a thing more divine than human, if they could have seen you as I see you to-day. Your thought, I say, seems to lift me up a step out of my dark reveries, and set me in a higher and sweeter air, a place of liberty. I felt that if the Father could make so sweet a thing as you, and set such a stainless love in your heart for those who had lived and died so long ago, there must be a treasure of love and compassion in that mighty heart that transcends all that we can dream of, if it can overflow in such force and might in the heart of one of these little ones.

I never fell back, after that day, into the same dreary chain of thought. I saw that I had been following reason too blindly, and not

holding close enough to love; and that the Father sent you to me that day, as a dear and gentle messenger of love, I doubt not. Even though Marjory should lay her fair head in the dust, her sweet spirit could lose nothing of its perfect purity, its unquestioning love. And thus, all unthinking, she opened to me that day a near and humble postern into the realms of light, when I had been making a weary pilgrimage afar off, and beating impotently at pompous doorways.

*September 3.*

That is a terrible vision, recorded by Isaiah, of the man who comes with dyed garments from Bozrah, who, as he draws closer, travelling in the greatness of his strength, is seen to be all splashed and stained with the juice of the wine-press that he has trodden in his fury and wrath.

There are times, when some land is overwhelmed with dreadful catastrophes, a famine or a revolution, when the innocent are dying in agony, when it is hard not to think of God as appearing in this appalling guise. If it were only the guilty that were overwhelmed, the tyrant, the gaoler, the soldier, who have slain ruthlessly and have revelled in the miseries of

their victims, one would feel otherwise. But when one reflects that these often pass through the crisis unharmed, when women and children suffer pain and atrocious indignity, when beauty and innocence seem the most fatal of all gifts, it is hard to read the faintest message of hope or tenderness into the dreadful scroll. It is not as though the number of atrocities mattered anything. One single case of deliberate cruelty, like the poor child who falls a victim to the lust of a company of barbarous soldiers, would upset the most carefully reasoned scheme of benevolence and omnipotence. For if identity continues, and if memory remains, how should such a child, whatever life of glory might be in store for it, ever be able to look back to such a ghastly memory without shame and horror. What length of untroubled days, what quiring harmonies of heaven, what paradise of love and peace could ever atone for such an hour? The thought is inconceivable, the problem defies the wisdom of the most tolerant philosopher. To such an one there must be some Lethæan draught to erase the memory of those vile outrages. We treasure the tales in which beauty and innocence have been saved by some seemingly divine interposition from dastardly wrong. But what of the

tears and anguish of those for whom there has been no such interposition? Do we really face such things when we parcel out an optimistic creed, when we subscribe complacently to human theories of Providence and God? It may be that no such case has come under our own observation; but is there any one who has had any experience of life that will dare to say that he has not encountered cases which are not inexplicable upon any theory of Love and Justice? Nothing but a perfect patience and an infinite hopefulness can sustain us. And even so the ensanguined figure, upheld by his fury, with vengeance in his heart, seems to draw near; "in His love and in His pity He redeemed them," says the tender prophet; but can he repair what is broken, and heal the wounds his hands have made?

*September 4.*

There is an old picture which hangs here in my room which moves me strangely. I do not know where it came from, and no one seems to know. Perhaps it is a copy of a famous picture, but I have never seen it engraved. It is so old and dark that it is difficult to say whether it had originally any artistic merits. It seems to represent a place on the edge of a wood;

on the left are dark trees; in the background rises a low hill, bare for the most part, with a few bushes upon it. To the right is a ruined building, an arch showing against the sky, with plants growing upon the top. In the centre of all is a thing which looks like a tomb—one can just see the edge of a cornice glimmering in the darkness. Beside the tomb, with hands outstretched as if in silent entreaty, stands the figure of a woman in a dark robe, with a floating veil or scarf over her shoulders. The sky is faintly lit, as by a rising moon. There is hardly any colour left in the picture, except in the sky, which is a pale green; and the ground, the foliage, the hill, are alike an indistinguishable brown—the face and hands of the woman and the marbles of the tomb seem of a pale ivory yellow; her outer robe seems to have been black, as there is an added darkness about her.

I think it is an Italian picture—and I have thought it may be meant to represent Queen Dido at the tomb of Sychæus. Whether it had any real beauty once or no, it has certainly a deep charm now. There is a sense of darkness and solitude, a hint of freshness, as of the night in woodland places; a mysterious sorrow in the attitude of the figure, as of one grieving in vain

for a beloved head. The picture affects my fancy tyrannously, and thrills me with a sense of an old sorrow that has yet something beautiful, calm, and sweet about it. The leaning wood, the lonely hill, the uncertain twilight, touch the heart, like a sad music, into a tender, a yearning delight. How is it that an old sorrow, seen far off, has this strange quality of beauty about it, denied to our own dreary and insistent grief? If the picture were a joyful one, a dance of nymphs under a summer shade, it would not have half the soothing, the moving power that this old dark scene of solitary grief has over the mind. Some might say that it perhaps means that there is a blessing in sorrow after all; although the only blessing that Christ could promise to those that mourn was that they should be comforted. But it is not the thought that the lonely figure of the mourner shall be refreshed and made joyful that moves me. It is rather the grief itself, the pain, the aching heart, that seems beautiful in itself, without any thought of what may be in store. It is so with music, it is so with song. As the old Greek poet said, men suffer and die that the tale of their sorrow may be sweet, in the ears of those who come after.

It is not so with pain of body—the picture of one suffering an extremity of pain would never be beautiful, and would move one only with horror.

I think it is because the sorrow speaks not only of itself, but of the love behind it, which makes the beauty of it. Loss brings out the depth, the intensity of love; and it is the thought of the love, for which the sorrow stands, that touches us. Sorrow purges love of all its weakness, all its accidents; makes it permanent and whole-hearted. The love that survives sorrow can never be shadowed any more by the things that shadow and weaken a living present love. My sister told me a story yesterday of one who was akin to us. He was little more than a boy, perhaps twenty when he died; he lived in the house of a cousin, a woman, happily married, some ten years older than himself, whom he loved with a silent, hopeless love. Just when he was dying, he sent a message to this cousin to come and see him. 'She came, and he asked her to kiss him once. She did so, wondering; he said, "At last," and died smiling. I do not know why that story should move me so much, why it should appear so beautiful. It is not beautiful in spite of its

sadness, but because of its sadness. Yet I am sure that what is beautiful about it is the intensity, the depth, the energy of the emotion it reveals. It gives one the hope that a thought which can outweigh and resist even the terrors of death, which is so passionate and strong, must have an abiding vitality in it, and must indeed outlast death.

*September 6.*

I have often wondered whether one's imagination can create anything which is different to and can transcend our experience, and I think it cannot. For instance, the mind cannot conceive of colours different to any that we have seen. There is a curious story of a blind man who said that the word *scarlet* to him seemed to suggest the sound of a trumpet, which seems to show that he was interpreting experience, which he did not know except through hearsay, by experience which he had himself known. If one tries to imagine forms, say, of animals or monsters which one has never seen, one can only imagine a combination and an exaggeration of things which we have seen. Probably there are in existence, on other planets, forms which lie quite outside our imagination. There are almost



certainly colours, just as there are certainly musical notes, probably in infinite gradation, beyond what our eyes and ears can apprehend.

One cannot, I think, conceive of a quality apart from material things. If one takes a colour, for instance, and tries to imagine it, one thinks of a thing which bears that colour, or a ray, or a square of the colour. I cannot imagine pure colour—it has, in my thoughts always a kind of texture as well.

So, too, I do not think we can conceive of virtues or sins apart from instances of those sins or virtues. If I think of cruelty, or liberality, I either see a scene which illustrates it, or at all events I recall a personality which possessed or possesses the quality.

I sometimes wonder whether our conceptions of God are not limited in the same way, whether we can attribute to Him any but human virtues; and I am disposed to think that the reason why we find so much in the world that is bewildering is because we try to put a kind of human motive behind it all; whereas it is probable that God has qualities which we are incapable in our present condition of even conceiving, qualities not only which transcend our own, but are simply unimaginable by us with our limited ex-

perience; all the confusion in our moral ideas, all the impenetrable difficulty of the world as it is, may be caused by the fact that things, as we see them, may be affected by these qualities, the very nature of which we are incapable of conceiving.

I do not know that the thought is a very sustaining one, but it may at least help us to suspend our judgment and not desire certainties.

*September 7.*

Sometimes I have a sense of a deep harmony in things, a strong and flowing current of love and peace to which I can surrender myself. Indeed, it often seems to me that the more I do this, the oftener that I dare trust this great and gracious influence, the more tranquil I become. Sometimes one seems beset with intolerable difficulties; one has to choose between two alternatives, each disastrous and painful: one incurs the anger and suspicion of one with whom one is bound to live; one's designs fail; one's efforts to do good are thwarted; one sees a fellow-being, whom God has made infinitely dear, drifting into irreparable evil; unbearable calamities hang over one; one's health is unequal to the strain of duties which it seems one has

to try to perform. Life is poisoned at its sources by sin, or shame, or fear.

Then, if one does the best of which one is capable, if one endures patiently, if one dares to resign oneself to the mighty power that sustains, one is sometimes floated out of one's difficulties by a resistless rising tide of strength and good. Our own efforts fail; the unexpected comes quietly to pass; a silent and secret change takes place; the burden is lifted by the vast force which we hardly dared invoke; the great, gentle, gliding medium envelops us. As a man may labour in vain to drag a boat up a steep shingle bank until he desists in despair; then, quietly flooding in, comes the great sea, so that at last a few gentle strokes of the oar effect in a few moments what he has toiled through weary hours of aching endeavour to effect.

And even if the sharp crisis we have so much dreaded draws nigh, we find that an un hoped-for courage and patience comes to our aid; till we smile to find that the agony we so shrank from is well within our strength to bear.

I am sure that the secret lies here, and that the more we dare to trust the great force that moves behind the world, the more that we strive to glide in unison with it, the happier we grow.

To accept the past as inevitable, to leave the future alone, and to live resolutely and cheerfully in the present, trusting rather than deciding, using rather than struggling, the nearer we come to the heart of God.

*September 9.*

The difference between the love of God and the love of men seems to be this. You are absolutely certain that men love you, while you know they do not perfectly know you. With God you are sure that He knows you perfectly and you cannot be absolutely sure that He loves you.

I remember, not long ago, when I was taking a country walk on Sunday, that I came to a little village church. The door was closed, and a children's service was proceeding. I listened in the porch: a peevish, droning voice made itself audible inside, among the scraping feet, the coughs, the restless movements of bored children. "We must never forget," it said, "that God loves us all; that is why He wishes to be called our Father."

I thought of the terrible God of my childish days. In the Old Testament, which we used to read, He seemed to be always doing fierce, harsh,

furious things; He was silent, invisible, severe, listening round corners, staring at one in the darkness, always ready to disapprove and to punish, only thinking that one was well employed when one was attending dreary services or reading the Bible.

Sunday, which I hated, was His day; the rest of the week seemed hardly to be His concern. I used to wonder faintly how it was that He had changed His character so completely in the New Testament, for in the Old Testament He seemed only to be pleased when people did courageous and disagreeable things. It was no wonder that I thought myself unfit for His company, and dreaded the thought of the Heaven over which He presided.

It is not surprising that children so brought up have many things to discover about God when they grow older. Religion did not interest me, and I did not understand that God was interested in anything else. The Sunday frame of mind, the heavy dreariness of the day when all the interests of life were suspended, or, if not suspended, practised guiltily, was, I thought, the only atmosphere congenial to Him. How can all this be remedied? Some children are by nature pious and saintly, but they ought not to have a monopoly of the sense of joy in His presence.

As one gets older, one desires more and more to be loved ; that begins to seem the one precious thing in the world ; and then there comes in the sad desire not to be thoroughly known by those whom one loves, because of the fear that if they knew one's failures, weaknesses, timidities, grossnesses, they would no longer be able to love one.

And so the longing of the soul grows, to be assured of the love of God : He at least knows one through and through. The worst need never be told Him, because He sees it ; our very faults and weaknesses are the gift of His hand. Can He indeed love the pitiful creature that He has made ? Can one indeed go like a tired child to a father's knee ? be pillowed in His arm, enfolded in His love ?

*September 10.*

I have been looking to-day at a book which gives an account of Antarctic exploration ; a finely-written book, with an artless simplicity of narrative, which gives it all the reality and vitality that can only be achieved by the highest art.

The pictures move me with a sense of the deepest wonder. The frozen plain, the interminable glaciers, the bare, broken rocks, the bleak precipices, bare and silent, naked of life.

There is something appalling about <sup>a</sup>the interminable march of time in these barren tracts ; the falling of snows in the aching stillness, the slow procession of huge ice-falls from the mountain top, the splintering of the black crag-faces. And all this freezing desolation, creeping, I suppose, by infinitesimal degrees, upon the world, as our vital heat cools.

Yet I suppose there were ages, lost in the vast perspective of years, when the snows fell dumbly, and the glaciers crawled downwards, and the stones dropped from the crags in the land where I myself dwell. One tends to survey the world so wholly from the human point of view that, one asks one's self in a bewildered amazement, what can be the use of these vast regions of inanimate desolation. One can bear the thought of these cold wildernesses, if one believes that rain, and wind, and sun, and leaping streams are levelling, stone by stone, these silent fastnesses, bidding the naked ridges sink down into the plain, to be covered at last with crops and the homes of men. And then one moves in thought through the vast pageant of the world ; the whirling fiery globe, the gathering of the waters together, the sun rising day by day over a boiling, steaming globe ; then the appearance of tropical forests,

the hot gloom crowded with fantastic vegetation ; then the slow creeping in of the temperate cold, the development of animal life, till at last man appears upon the scene, and becomes able, strangest mystery of all, to depict in shadowy glimpses to himself what the course of the world has been ; the size, the complexity, the intolerable variety and patience of the huge design ! Yet every drop of water in those wandering seas, every crystalline snowflake that falls on the untrodden polar hills, has the same intense and awful significance. Each holds within itself the same amazing problem, the same depth of mystery. What is it all aiming at ? whither is it all tending ? How is it that we can see, by a divine intuition, all that is happening, and guess at all that has happened, and yet be utterly unable to form the faintest conception of what is to be hereafter, of the reason of the whole ? No wonder that the man of science who sees the minuteness of our own tiny intuitions, and the vastness of the design that lies about us, loses himself in a blank repudiation of our flimsy interpretations of the mind of God. The only solution is to fix our minds upon nearer concerns and direct relations. To lose ourselves in these gigantic and stupefying reveries merely palsies and terrifies the mind.



And yet we cannot leave them out of our reckoning if we are to hope to find a formula to reconcile our petty self-absorptions with the stupendous designs of God. But wandering in thought beside that ice-bound sea, with range after range of snow-piled summits bounding the furthest horizon, a deep awe falls upon my spirit, as I feel that not only is it not all in vain, but that it holds some gigantic secret, close to my hand, if I could but unveil it : and there stirs in my soul a sweet and ardent gratitude to God for permitting me, so frail a creature, with so short a space of sun and shade to traverse, to gaze even for an instant into His mighty treasure-house, to stand even for a moment at His side, and to survey with Him the very pulse and motion of His boundless heart.

*September 11.*

✓ One little story in the Antarctic book fills me with a sense of almost desperate pathos. Three of the voyagers started, with a train of dogs to drag their sledges, to penetrate as far as they could the frozen hills. They were reduced to very small rations of food, and the dogs, though willing and friendly enough, began to collapse and fail with fatigue and want of

nourishment. They were obliged to kill them one by one. Each of the party in turn had to lead the dog that seemed most exhausted away from the camp, put him to death, and return with his body, which was presently eaten by the other dogs. The poor creatures at last grew to understand, that when in the evening one of the sledge party left the tents accompanied by a dog, it meant a speedy prospect of food. And so the sad ceremony was always heralded by an outburst of cheerful and excited barking from the rest of the troop. The victim himself always shared in the excitement, and accompanied his executioner, wagging his tail and uttering joyful barks, under the impression that he was specially favoured by being led to the source of the desired food. The dogs never for an instant grew to realise that it was the body of a companion that they were eating, nor did the particular dog selected for death ever so dimly perceive that he was chosen for the sinister purpose. It is infinitely pathetic that they should have been so intelligent up to a certain point, and that their intelligence should have yet been so limited, as never to make them in the least suspicious about what was happening. I suppose it is a false sentiment, and that the pathos

is thrown away; but I confess that the thought of the bright-eyed furry creature, going off so cheerfully and blithely with his assassin, with whom he had trudged so many an icy mile, and whose provisions he had so willingly carried, to suffer death, that his companions might prolong their lives, is almost unbearably sad.

Yet pity is wasted so: perhaps the poor beast had a moment of fear when he found that the friend whom he trusted raised his hand to kill him, before he fell in his blood upon the snow. But if only one's own imagination could be so little exercised as that by any sad foreboding of death, what a load of pain would be removed! And at the same time one cannot help wondering what is the meaning of those little obscure lives devoted so willingly to the service of man, only to die by his hand? Have we indeed a right to use them so? I cannot help wondering if they were created with that design.

*September 12.*

“O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace.” What a pathetic cry is there! I have been trying to think, with the words echoing in my mind, what they mean to me.

Do I believe that the sacrifice of Christ took away sin in some mechanical way? Do I believe that men could not go to God and be forgiven before Christ died? I cannot honestly say that I believe either. I do not see that the bitter fountain of sin is less lavish of its dark waters, since the day when He hung on Calvary. It may indeed be so, but nothing except unattainable statistics could prove it. I cannot take it on trust. The black stream of impurity, cruelty, selfishness, still runs very swiftly through the world. It is lessened, no doubt, by the slow working of the Gospel message; there is a gain, an increase, year by year, of Christian love and courage and hope; but that is a beautiful and natural process, handed on from heart to heart, by precept, by example, even by inherited instinct. I see around me men who profess no belief in Christian doctrine, who yet live on Christian principles, who have inherited purity and kindness from long lines of Christian ancestors. All that I readily believe. But He did not take away sin.

Neither do I believe that the nature of God was altered by the sacrifice of Christ. If He is merciful and loving now, He was merciful and loving before; if He was stern, vindictive,

harsh before, He is stern, harsh, vindictive still. It could not be that an old and lasting resentment against man that had brooded in the mind of God against the creatures of His hand, was wiped away by the death of Christ. The thought is intolerable.

And yet there is a sense in which I can say the words; for I believe with all my heart that those who can discern the nature of the Lamb of God, who can passionately desire to imitate His stainlessness, His patient love, cannot go back to the world after such a vision without some added brightness, some radiance of hope.

But the doctrine of the Atonement, as commonly understood, obscure, intricate, and even barbarous as it is, must be either true or false; it cannot contain a half-truth. The laws of life and death are obscure and mysterious enough, as they are slowly revealed by science. It may be that God's outraged sense of justice required that a victim should suffer who had not deserved to suffer; but that outrages all my highest conceptions of justice too; it insults, terrifies, and paralyzes the soul. I am forced to inquire whether there is any evidence for the doctrine as stated, whether it is more than the shadow of man's terror and bewilderment cast upon his religion,

from the days of barbarous sacrifice, when he tried to appease a seeming wrathful God by the giving back a part of what he found himself in the possession of.

I can only say honestly, that if I had reason to believe that the doctrine of the Atonement, as commonly taught and accepted, represented a truth, I should indeed despair of life and love and God. It is hard not to despair as it is: but that would put the coping-stone on the sinister structure.

*September 13.*

I have heard a man say, "If I were certain that identity did not endure, I should let myself go, and lay out my life to get as much enjoyment out of it as I could." I have heard another say, "It is nothing but my faith in immortality that makes me try to do what is right." I do not think, so far as I can judge, that these statements are true, though I am sure that the words were said in both instances quite sincerely. A certainty of immortality or a certainty of the cessation of identity, would, I am sure, make a great difference to us. But even to the strongest faith or to the deepest scepticism there can be nothing approaching a practical certainty. If we were as certain of either immortality or annihilation as we are

certain that we shall die, the certainty would to some extent affect our lives—but even so, the certainty that we shall some day die does not affect our lives, our plans, or our designs very much. It is not a thing which as a rule modifies our actions. In the absence of any direct evidence as to the conditions of existence or non-existence after death, the probability or possibility of either alternative cannot be a very constraining motive.

When a man, then, says that, if he knew that identity terminated with death, he would arrange his life on a different plan, or that his faith in immortality is the one thing that makes him try to do what is right, I cannot help doubting whether the absence of knowledge or the presence of faith would or does constitute so strong a motive as the speakers believe. I think that, as a matter of fact, the first speaker is probably trying, as it is, to make the most out of his life, and pursuing a course of action which he believes does tend to his happiness in this life; and the second speaker would, I think, probably try to do right even if his faith were not so strong. Or rather I think that the whole thing goes together, and that in the one case the absence of any certainty is as an much instinctive thing as the instinct which

makes the man avoid the pursuit of immediate gratifications of sense ; and that in the other case, the tendency to hope for immortality, and to believe it probable, is as much instinctive as the tendency to try and do what is right. People are really guided, both in matters of belief and action, by temperament far more than by conviction ; and I do not honestly think that convictions shape character nearly so much as character shapes convictions. The man whose tendency it is to labour for others, to deny himself, to work for a cause, would, I believe, act on very much the same lines whether he was Christian, Buddhist, or Mahommedan. I do not say that this is wholly true, because a particular faith tends to emphasise certain virtues, and to make it easier to practise them, and because character is considerably affected by surroundings. But I think it very rare indeed—I cannot think of any instance in my own circle of friends—to find a man who, because of his convictions, exercises virtues or yields to faults which are wholly foreign to his character. We affect, I believe, our descendants far more than we affect ourselves, by a struggle to correct a fault of character, just as we ourselves are far more affected by the virtues or the faults that we inherit than we are affected by rational conclusions.



The light indeed by which we walk is within us, rather than outside of us ; and it is in our own souls that we must seek for it rather than in any external illumination.

I believe that we do better, if we accept it as a fact, that for some purpose or other we are not intended to have any certain knowledge as to what awaits us, than if we spend our time in trying to catch glimpses of the unknown. Such evidence as there is upon the point is purely intuitional in any case ; and we must beware of trusting to human imaginations, however pure, ardent and hopeful they may be, in the absence of the normal and universal evidence upon which our practical certainties are based.

September 15.

I was reading the Bible this morning and came upon that strange verse in the II. Chronicles—

*Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem ; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.*

I have often wondered what the poor child did? Whether his name was made the screen for the acts of some cruel vizier, while he sate in the royal nursery among his toys. Imagine

the most selfish, stupid, froward, discontented child of that age that we have ever known. What should we think of the parents who inscribed such a verse upon his tombstone, if the unhappy little creature died in his ninth year?

Perhaps the old chronicler only concluded that the little king acted abominably, because he was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, which could be held to prove the displeasure of God. In these old chronicles there is no nice attempt to weigh characters; men either did evil or they did good; they never seemed to have any relapses into either vice or virtue.

I once heard an intolerable clergyman take this poor text, and brandish it like a whip over the heads of little children. I could not help wondering what he was doing in the sight of the Lord.

But granted that Jehoiachin was an evil, spiteful, selfish child, whose fault was it? These natures that one sometimes encounters, perverse, malignant, cruel from the beginning, how they disorder one's belief in providence in God; for that is the misery of the position. If one could believe that God had ever made a wholly worthless and evil being, a source of pure misery to itself and others, He is either not omnipotent or not benevolent.

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*September 18.*

There is a monument, a mural tablet, in the church here, about a hundred years old, the quiet record of what must have been a terrible tragedy. It records the death of three sons of a former vicar. The eldest died at the age of twenty-five. In the following year the second son died at the age of eighteen, and in the year after that the third son died at the age of sixteen. I cannot find out anything about these poor people; but it is hard to feel from the point of view of either the parents or the boys themselves that the story, whatever it was, can indicate a merciful loving or probationary design. It seems a hopeless tragedy, and if I were told to invent a fiction, leading up to and following from these events, which should exhibit the Providence of God in a hopeful and beautiful light, I should find it an impossible task. The most that one could do would be to draw a picture of faithful and tender resignation under an overwhelming calamity; and as for the death of the three sons at so early an age, I could only depict it as either terminating blameless lives, and accepted without repining; or as removing them from the shadow of inevitable affliction, from a world with which

they were unfitted to contend. The tragedy of the circumstances haunts me, a tragedy enacted in these very rooms in which I now live.

It may be said that it is morbid to consider so closely the circumstances of a calamity in which the actors are unknown to me; that if I look round at the other memorials of the dead I shall find abundance of testimony to long and prosperous lives; and that the average duration of life and the average distribution of happiness should rather be considered.

But this solution does not help me, for the simple reason that we human beings are each given a separate individuality and a separate consciousness. The solution, whatever it is, ought to be true for every individual case and not only for the majority of cases. If the Creator of men is indeed all-powerful and all-loving, each single being He creates ought to enjoy his own personal hope, ought to have enough light to meet the problem that confronts him, enough evidence to convince him that he is the object of the Father's tender care. To merge our individual consciousness in the consciousness of the race; to reflect that there seems to be in the world a certain element of pain and failure, to console ourselves with the thought that

by having to bear an excessive share of suffering we are perhaps lightening the general load a little, is a lofty, noble, and philosophical position; but it requires an amount of unselfishness and an amount of intellectual imagination which makes it a perfectly impossible position for young, frail, unimaginative, simple people to adopt. One ought to be able to assure, say, a boy condemned to suffering and an early death, perhaps through no fault of his own, that there is a destiny in store for him which, if he could fully realise it, would make him accept his doom willingly and even joyfully. But can we do this? Alas, the most we can say is that in darkened heart and bewildered brain there yet lurks a hope that it may even be so. To regard such a tragedy, as the one recorded on that marble slab, as fortuitous, is intolerable; to regard it as merciful and benevolent is well-nigh impossible. The only direction in which our hopes can turn is in the direction of believing that the design of God is so vast and so august, that these seeming anomalies will ultimately appear of so minute a character that they will not only not bewilder us, but will fall into their places in a gigantic, a stupendous plan, which will satisfy us beyond our deepest hope. But in dreary and uncom-

forted days, when the pain is so near, so urgent, and when the hope lies so remote, and the way thither so beset with countless obstacles, God, if He be what we believe Him to be, must surely have some strangely beautiful purpose in view if He can so guard from us the hope that would make these things bearable.

As it is, I can hardly dare to picture to myself the stupefied agony of the poor household, when, after the death of the first-born, the fear begins to beckon on the horizon that the life of the second son must be surrendered; and then, when that too is over, and disease again creeps nearer, laying its hand upon the boy that yet remains; and then when he too is laid to rest, and the parents are left in cheerless solitude, with nothing but a memory of the sweet past, how hard a task to believe it even a duty to bless the name of the Lord who gives and takes away, when other homes are musical with children's voices and busy with all the dear cares of household life!

*September 21.*

Mr. Yeats, in a beautiful Essay on William Blake, which I have been reading, says that in Blake's time "educated people believed that they amused themselves with books of imagination,

but that they 'made their souls' by listening to sermons and by doing or not doing certain things." "In our time," he goes on to say, "we are agreed that we 'make our souls' out of some one of the great poets of ancient times, or out of Shelley, or Wordsworth, or Goethe, or Balzac, or Flaubert, or Count Tolstoy in the books he wrote before he became a prophet and fell into a lesser order, or out of Mr. Whistler's pictures, while we amuse ourselves, or at best, make a poorer sort of soul, by listening to sermons, or by doing or not doing certain things. . . . No matter what we believe with our lips, we believe with our hearts that . . . when time has begun to wither, the Divine hand will fall heavily on bad taste and vulgarity."

That is a fine idea, beautifully expressed, and represents perhaps the consummate essence of the hope of those who live in and for art.

But what I long to ask the author is where the conviction comes from that he here gives voice to. He sets aside the ethical and the so-called religious solutions of life, and falls back upon the artistic solution. I suppose he would reply that it was an intuition so intense that it had for him the force of a conviction. But what I desire is sufficient evidence of the truth of this

intuition which would make me inclined to move in the direction of the solution which he indicates. There is no doubt that there are certain natures born into the world over whom beauty has so sweet and so constraining a power, that they believe by intuition that the essence of the nature of God is beauty. But these natures are rare; and there is no sign that they are becoming very much commoner. There are people too in the world, whose intuitions are just as strong, that the solution of the problem of existence will prove to be an ethical one; and these people are as sensitive to the beauty of virtue as artists to the beauty of art. But there is a far larger class of people whose intuition is just as strong that the end of existence is prosperity and material enjoyment; and all these three classes have a certain amount of evidence which justifies them in regarding the objects and the thoughts which they so ardently pursue as being at all events a part of the design of God.

What I miss in the utterance is a certain large tolerance, a belief that God appeals to people in very various ways. To announce a conclusion with the certainty which Mr. Yeats deals in is surely to place himself among the prophets rather than among the poets, a function which



he regards as an inferior one. The statement indeed appears to me as dogmatic and as unreasonable as the old orthodoxy. If one looks close at life, the only things which natural law seems to punish are carelessness and excess; it derides innocence and beauty; it attacks the purest and sweetest character with what looks like a deep injustice, if a parent or grandparent has violated the law of temperance. No amount of personal virtue, no amount even of good taste, saves the unhappy descendant of vicious persons from bearing the burden of their sins, even when they did not have to bear the burden of them themselves. Viewing the position indeed from the philosophical standpoint, it may be said that human beings have actually to combine together to save themselves from the blind working of the forces of God; and in the religious region, they have similarly to combine together to encourage each other to believe in the justice and holiness of His nature, when an afflicted individual cannot discern it.

Mr. Yeats goes on in a noble passage to say that everything that lives is holy, and that nothing is unholy except things that do not live, such as cruelties, he adds, and other forms of vice. ' "Passions," he says, "are most holy

because most living, and a man shall enter eternity borne on their wings."

But this position, again, though it has much that is lofty and dignified about it, is equally unphilosophical. Some of the things that war most implacably against virtue and beauty alike are things, like disease, lower instinct, crime, which have a terrible vitality of their own. "*Mine enemies live and are mighty*," said the Psalmist, and it is none the less true to-day. Even passions themselves are destructive things, and it is clear that Mr. Yeats includes personal passions in his thought, and does not only mean large and generous enthusiasms, patriotism, virtue, unselfishness, noble indignation.

That is the most terrible part of the problem; that the mighty force, that moves behind created things, seems to be arrayed upon both sides of the battle; it urges us through nature and instinct to be cruel, indolent, selfish, timid. It bids us, on the other hand, to be noble, kind, peaceable, courageous. The difficulty is to decide which of these urgent voices to obey and follow, which to disregard and to resist. The victory lies not in the reckless following of generous impulses, the pursuit of attractive virtue, but in a wise and tranquil balance of soul; in-

stinct and reason, unequal companions, must make common cause, just as the lame man and the blind man in the old story fared together on a pilgrimage which either separately could not have attempted; the blind man carrying his lame companion, lending legs and borrowing eyes.

*September 22.*

I have said, I see, very little of Frank in these pages, and yet he has been unwearingly, endlessly kind. He has really made me feel as though it were a joy and delight to him that it is his house that I should be ill in, with all the expense and trouble it entails. He has been consistently hopeful and cheerful, and there has been no pretence about it all; I do not suppose that a single thought of inconvenience has ever crossed his mind. He comes to see me constantly, bringing with him the brightness and serenity of a perfectly strong affectionate character.

And yet I have not been able to say a single word to him on the subjects which have been most in my mind; to him it is all simply metaphysical speculation, not so much a temptation of the evil one, as an unhappy burden that such temperaments as mine have to sustain. It makes him more tender, more compassionate,

more devoted. Frank has never the least doubt or difficulty. His theory of life is a simple one; it is that one must believe what one is told, not set up one's judgment against the accumulated wisdom of the world; that it will be all right somehow and somewhere, and meanwhile one must just help people along to the best of one's ability.

A pure and noble faith! made possible by inheritance from old and joyful saints, joined to a perfectly temperate, wholesome, balanced nature, untroubled by the malady of thought. Yet I do not envy Frank his certainties—*miror magis*. If there were more people like him, the world would be a happier and a simpler place. Yet he does not shut his eyes to difficulties; he looks, and they do not seem to him to be there. He lives, I think, almost purely by instinct. Yet he is a man of ability, interested in books, appreciative. He has no critical faculty; when people do what he thinks wrong, he does not blame them—he is sincerely sorry for them. He believes in God; he believes in the devil, though he would call it the personality of evil; but he has no desire to know how things came about—it is enough that they are there.

It does me good to be with him,<sup>f</sup> and I love him as well as I know he loves me. How strange he would think it if he knew that with all my love and admiration for him, the thought of his existence, his splendid certainty, his vigorous faith, his unresting energy, does but deepen the impenetrable mystery of being which continues to haunt my mind.

*September 24.*

I had a curious talk yesterday with an energetic and able clergyman of the neighbourhood who came in to visit me. He was deploring the lack of conviction in the world at the present time, and he said that the reason why men were so often ineffective was because they were uncertain. He added that we should have had no Reformation from the teaching of Erasmus; it arose from the intense convictions of Luther, though his was a much more limited personality than the personality of Erasmus.

I said that I thought that at the present time certainty was a thing which it was increasingly difficult to attain. That the old religious certainties were shown by science and historical criticism to be impossible; but I added that I believed that gain must result from the process;

it could not be that the more one diverged from truth, the more effective one became. . .

He seemed dissatisfied with the conclusion, and inclined to think that an irrational certainty was a diviner thing than a rational uncertainty. He said it was all a kind of Agnosticism, and said that it grieved him to find that the margin of permissible agnosticism seemed to him to be increasing every day in religious regions.

It is certainly true, I reflected afterwards, that the more we know of God through studying nature, the more uncertain we become about Him. Our forefathers, for instance, believed that the Old Testament story, the dealings of God with the chosen race of Israel, was all a record of actual facts. But nowadays there are many perfectly sincere clergymen who practically do not believe the miraculous element of the Old Testament; who no longer hold that Moses brought the decalogue down from a mountain, written on tablets of stone by the fingers of God; who do not believe that He suggested the sacrifice of Isaac, or that He recommended the extermination of heathen tribes. They frankly believe that much of what is represented as the advice and counsel of God was human policy, enshrouded, for diplomatic reasons, in super-

stitious reverence. They do not really believe that on a certain day Elijah called down the fire of heaven on his altar, when the priests of Baal were unable to do the same; or that Moses disseminated plagues in the land of Egypt, and that the sea stood up like a wall on either hand to let the Israelites go through.

It is this that makes the position of our clergy so extremely unsatisfactory; that they are still bound to give a formal assent, and to preach the truth of records in which they do not wholly believe.

What will emerge from, what will survive this inevitable rationalism is hard to say. But for all brave and truth-loving people the path is clear. We must accept no religious statement of truth, unless reason and experience to a certain extent confirm it. The one thing that seems to defy the solvents of rationalism is the personality of Christ; it may be surrounded by unhistorical legends, but nothing can take away the wonder and sublimity of His teaching and of His example. We may ransack the records of humanity in vain for such a figure, such a life, such a conception of moral virtue. It is a supreme instance of a superhuman intuition, confirming its conclusions by reason and experience.

And yet how simple was His discovery, if it

may reverently be so called. To take the highest, strongest, sweetest emotion of humanity, and to identify that with God. He did not say that God was loving, but that God was Love. Could a mere man have seen that, have said that? I do not think so. And on that rock my faith is built.

*September 25.*

Murray, our squire, called to see me to-day; an excellent fellow for whom I have a cordial respect and liking; sensible, good-humoured, kindly—exactly the type of man who is turned out by scores from our public schools; and, moreover, exactly the sort of man whom a perfect competitive examination would select to be a squire, if they examined for such posts, as they do in China.

Unfortunately, he brought with him a cousin of his, Lord B., whom I have met before, and whom I have the misfortune to dislike. Lord B. was at Eton, where he was a humble and obscure sort of boy; he could not play games, he was no good at his work, and no one paid him the least attention. At home he was brought up by an indulgent widowed mother, a silly woman, daughter of a Duke, with a strong



sense of her importance. He was at Oxford at the same time as myself, but I did not know him there; he belonged to a sporting set, and was eventually sent down for a rather dingy business, wrecking the shop of a small tradesman, or something of the kind. Since then he has done nothing in particular. He is not married; he is enormously wealthy; he neither shoots nor hunts; he goes to some race-meetings, and he has a set of rather vulgar friends, who stay with him, and, I suppose, amuse him. He is tall and thin; he has an aquiline nose, a short forehead, very little chin to speak of; and large, hard, luminous eyes. He looks about him in a way that I can only describe as insolent, as if he wondered to what strange and low place a man of distinction had been brought. He is polite without being courteous; he says very little, and indeed he has very little to say. His conversation at his own house mostly consists of personal remarks on the behaviour and appearance of his friends, followed by a tittering laugh. I cannot think why Murray tolerates him; but Murray would never ostracise any one, and says that B. isn't really a bad fellow when you know him.

I may, of course, be judging him hardly, but

I confess that I think that he cumbers the earth. He has a strong and complacent sense of his wealth and rank, and despises rather than pities people who do not possess the same advantages. I feel sure he is a selfish and heartless fellow, and probably capable of cruelty; also he is physically a coward. If he were a poor and undistinguished man he would cringe to his superiors, and bully his wife and children. It is very difficult to get him to do anything for the people on his estate, and he takes no trouble whatever to know them.

The curious problem is why so many of the things that people agree to think desirable should be lavished on this man; and he is a happy man too, because he thoroughly enjoys the consciousness of being a magnate. It is a humiliating fact that probably nine out of ten people would willingly change places with him, and there are abundance of pleasant girls who would not hesitate to marry him. He will probably live to a great age, because he is a healthy fellow and takes great care of himself. If he lives to be eighty he will have received in the course of his life a good deal over two millions of money, of which he will not willingly have spent a penny upon any one else. He will have lived for many years in an ancient house

which is a dream of beauty, a palace full of treasures of art, standing in exquisite gardens. He will have lived in honour and respect which he has never earned. No one will regret him for an instant. Meanwhile the heir to his honours and estates, if he does not marry, is a really fine fellow, a hard-working politician, with strong views about social reform.

There seems something strangely awry about the whole business. What B. needs to make a man of him is humiliation, toil, disappointment on the one hand—and on the other, generosity, affection, and unselfishness. The theory that life is a probation seems to crumble to pieces before such an existence as this, because this shallow, insolent, complacent little soul seems to be put in exactly the position to develop all his worst qualities, to be persuaded daily, by all the resources of humanity, to think himself great, magnificent and important. What is the use, one is tempted to ask, of fooling such a man to the top of his bent? if there is an after-existence, it must be a time of crushing disillusionment. Surely the process, whatever it is, could be done more simply? Of course, it may be said that one should not think so much of material conditions, that one should feel that

God's concern is with the soul, and not with its worldly environment. But if so, why is the instinct so deeply and widely implanted in human nature, to value so highly the trappings of wealth and consequence. Most people envy B., and very few contest his perfect right to enjoy his advantages. Such a man as B. does make one feel that the world is out of joint, and shakes one's confidence in the morality that is preached from a thousand pulpits, because B. is an undeniably fortunate and happy man, and does not deserve to be ; even if disaster were now to fall on him, he will have had twenty years of complacent enjoyment of some of the best things that the world can give ; and if, as I say, he is to be hereafter disillusioned, it seems a needless cruelty to have surrounded him with such elaborate illusions here.

*September 28.*

Lord B.'s visit has set me thinking about the parable of Dives and Lazarus ; it is surely a very curious, very socialistic story.

Dives is not depicted as a cruel, vicious, or selfish man ; indeed, he is the reverse, because in his torment he thinks of his brothers, enjoying themselves peaceably in the upper world, and begs

that the sad truth may be revealed to them. Neither is Lazarus represented as a benevolent or affectionate person ; he is deeply afflicted, but he tries in the story to get what enjoyment he can, even though it is only to munch the broken meats in the sun. The torment and the refreshment seem to be given to the two in the after-world, simply in order that their positions may be reversed. One who was made rich by God is tortured for having been rich ; one who was made poor and diseased by God is comforted because he was poor. One feels bound to take for granted that Dives was vicious and cruel, and that Lazarus was patient and virtuous ; but Christ never says a word to indicate that in the story. And then, too, there is a horrible sternness about the answers of Father Abraham : " They have Moses and the prophets," he says ; " let them hear them." What are they to hear them say ? Moses and the prophets never say that it is wrong to be rich, but rather that prosperity is the natural reward of virtue ; and they certainly give no hint of an after-existence, in which the possession of wealth is sternly chastised, and poverty is compensated. The unhappy Dives thinks that perhaps a great shock, the return of some spirit from the after-world to warn his brothers, might have an effect. But

Abraham says they will not be persuaded even by that. Persuaded of what? That they should divest themselves of their wealth, and betake themselves to poverty and sickness, in order that they may win a reward?

Is it not strange, too, in passing, that Christ should give, in the story, to the man who may not be sent back to the world of men, the very name of the one man who was so recalled?

And yet there is a solemnity, an authenticity about the parable, which makes one feel that it is a very real dictum of Christ's. It cannot be said that the details ought not to be pressed, because it is one of the very few statements of Christ in which He deliberately drew aside for a moment the veil of death. I find it hard to believe that it is not a deliberate utterance; and yet, in the absence of any moral condemnation of Dives or any moral approval of Lazarus, I find it very hard to feel that the punishment of one or the reward of the other has any semblance of justice about it. It is true that the utterance may have been imperfectly recorded; but yet, on the other hand, it is given with a fulness of dramatic detail which makes one feel that one here gets very near to the words of Christ. The lesson does not seem to be that one must use wealth well or bear poverty patiently;

but that the possession of wealth in this world seems to entail dreadful consequences in the next world, while to be poor and diseased in this world is an earnest of future happiness. I am unable to disentangle it.

*October 3.*

I am growing stronger every day. I write less in my diary, because I am living instead of thinking. Each day is so full of sweet and fragrant impressions that I cannot make any choice among them. I seem to have no wish to record them ; it is enough to experience them.

The summer is over ; the trees are splashed and streaked with gold ; the flowers die one by one. Yet every day seems rich in new surprises. I seem never to have seen these things before ; yet I have been always observant, a careful gatherer and noter of impressions, to use them, God forgive me, to adorn my books. I feel as if I should never have time to write again, in a world where there is so much to see and love. Before, there was an irreparable regret about the fading of sweet things ; now each hint of change, if it is only the change of death, seems full of a vast significance. Each day that passes seems perfect in itself, whether the sun shines golden on the tangled garden, or

whether the sullen skies weep their laden stores away. There seems a mighty spirit abroad ; not the prodigal spirit of summer, lavishing life and bloom, but a stronger, sterner spirit, graver, too, and sweeter, that sits musing in the short twilights among the rusted leaves.

*October 7.*

At one time my journalistic work used to necessitate my spending a month in a local centre. I used to shut up my rooms in London, and take lodgings in a quiet country town, where I was in charge of a branch establishment, while the sub-editor took a holiday. I had some friends there, and invariably enjoyed it. Yet I used to leave town with a dreary sense of banishment and discomfort, my habits interrupted, my plan of life disordered. The very same process used to take place upon my return to London. I used to leave my country lodgings reluctantly and unwillingly. I used to picture to myself the disagreeable side of the London life, the intricate relations with people, the din, the hurry, the pressure. Yet after I had been in London a week, I used to feel that it was the only place where I cared to live.



. It is a curious thing how deeply rooted this instinct is in human nature; because though I knew perfectly well in London that I should find my month in the country pleasant, and though I was quite aware in the country how much I enjoyed the London life, yet the certainty never brought the slightest comfort.

It is an allegory of what we all feel in the back of our minds about death—the suspension of the familiar activities. But the strange thing again is that the inherited instincts of humanity never seem to bring any alleviation of the trouble. If there is one thing certain, it is that life is brief and insecure; that we have no continuing city; and yet there is this deep sense of a desire for permanence; the wish to keep things as they are; to abide in the familiar. Even the most adventurous spirits, who love change of scene, and exploration, and even danger, shrink back appalled from the thought of death. The bewildering thing is that the Power that made us should have placed us in a sphere where tranquillity and security are impossible, and yet should have endowed us with the intense desire for both. Stranger still that the accumulated experience of mankind, through centuries of inheritance, should not have come any nearer to acquiescing

in the uprooting and transplanting of ourselves from life. It is impossible to see how this anomaly can tend to our ultimate happiness; and yet the conviction of ultimate happiness survives even this constantly apparent evidence to the contrary.

*October 12.*

I have often read in books of the joys of convalescence, but they are sharper and sweeter than one could have conceived.

Day by day I grow in strength. I can walk an hour or two without fatigue; the perception of the sounds, the scents, the lights of earth seize me with ineffable delight. I could almost have shed tears to-day at the sight of the red breast of a robin that came pecking round me, and at his shrill comfortable note. The very savours of food have a poignancy that I have never felt since my childhood. The cool white linen of my bed, as I settle myself after a happy day into a delicious weariness, gives me exquisite delight. Everything that I see or do or hear seems to have a rich and sweet significance. A glance, a lifting of the eyes, the touch of a hand, a word falling from one of my dear ones, gives me a thrill of pleasure. I seem to have been

washed clean and pure by my long rest, and given a new heart.

I have not written in my diary for some days; it is because the actual simplicities of life have been so absorbing that I have had no time to reflect, and yet, when I read the pages, with their tremulous record, I do not feel that there is any morbidity about it. It is as true as when it was written. All those uneasy thoughts, those dark mysteries are there; only just now, with all the radiance of the new life about me, I have no leisure to think of them.

I am to go away in a few days. I always dislike moving; I dislike breaking up a dear group, changing my environment, adopting a new way of life. But I am too full of a serene happiness to vex myself over it. I am to go down to the sea for a month; and I have persuaded Frank to let me take the children with me, who are wild with delight. Indeed, I find myself looking forward to it with the delight of a child.

I am by no means well yet. I have dizzinesses, little failures of power, breathlessness, weakness. But they diminish daily; and so strange and transfiguring a thing is the physical well-being which throbs through me, that they

are not even unpleasant in themselves. I seem to be content whatever I am doing. " If I cannot walk, I can sit and read ; if I cannot read, I can look about me ; I can even sink into sleep with a sense of delicious surrender.

Indeed, I seem to have become a child again—and aware of a fact of which I had not been hitherto aware, namely, of how much my physical constitution had altered since my childhood. I always felt the same ; but now there is an active joy, a swiftness of recuperation, an acute sensibility to small sensations, which my life had lost.

*October 14.*

I am going away to-morrow ; my things are mostly packed—the things that I brought down here so many months ago for what I expected to be a short visit. Then it was winter ; now it is autumn ; the spring and the summer have gone very strangely for me ; and I feel separated from my old life as by a deep trench of experience—though even now the intermediate experience seems to be fading, and the old life begins to flow into the new.

And I have been through the darkest experience known to man—no, not the darkest, because I have not had to face hopeless suffering. I have

suffered very little, so far as pain goes; but I have twice been certain, as far as one can be certain, that I was going to die; twice I lost my hold of life, and only waited for the end; twice I climbed back to life. What have I gained from it all? To-day I can hardly say, because I seem to have been born again; a new life runs strongly and evenly through my veins; and the joy of that is so intermingled with my thought that it is hard to disentangle it; hard to discern whether I have gained anything that will not desert me when the dark days come again to me, as sometime they must.

Have I lost my fear of death? I cannot say. To-day life and death alike seem beautiful, charged with sweet secrets, musical with dreams.

What of my faith, my religion? To-day again that seems to have become a simpler, freer thing, not a hope mixed up with knowledge, a strange hybrid, compounded part of history, part of philosophy, part of moral effort. To-day it seems a kind of close kinship, a nearness of spirit, an attitude. There seems a Person behind it all to-day, who sees, listens, approves, loves.

And yet I am less certain of what my faith is than I ever was before; my old doubts, doctrines, beliefs, seem like the noise of a far-off city, to one

who is speeding into quiet fields full of sunset light. My former difficult, complicated system, when compared with my new lightness of heart, seems like the study of anatomy compared with a consciousness of youthful strength. In one sense I feel more certain than ever, because something seems to breathe and stir behind the curtain of mystery, which I now no longer desire to lift. Before I seemed like a child who lifts the corner of a window-blind, and sees the blackness of night outside.

I said somewhere in my diary that faith ought to be a lively hope, with the first few steps of the onward path discerned by reason: that is what I feel to-day; the hope is mine, and the path is there; all I seem to have discarded is a fanciful map of the way.

And yet I do not know how much of this bright intuition that dwells with me is the consequence of physical health. Probably much of its pulsing radiance is the result of my having had what I have not known for years—a long rest. This stock of vigour that seems to have been quietly accumulating will not last for ever; I shall be weary, and unstrung, and forlorn again, I well know. But it will not all leave me. I have drawn nearer to the central

forces of the earth; I am like a man who has lifted a stone from the ground, and seen a hidden stream running swiftly under dark arches. I have drawn nearer to love. These dear ones here whom I thought indeed I loved before—their lives were outside of mine, and now they seem intermingled. It is not only that our lives have touched, day after day, that I have been dependent on them in my helplessness as I was never dependent on human beings before—it is something different from that; a tide of emotion, a secret current runs between my soul and theirs.

And yet I am not sure of immortality; I am not sure of any continuance of personal identity. If I were to answer questions sincerely to some inquisitive person who examined me in my faith, I should reply that I did not know, to many questions which a few months ago I should have answered stupidly and irritably in the affirmative; and yet there are some parts of my belief—in the Christian sacrament, for instance—which are richer and fuller than ever before, because through it there seems to flow something of that moving tide of love which bears us on its bosom as it sets to unknown shores. God, Christ, the Spirit, these are not doctrines to me any more, but vital presences, larger if less

precise, dearer if more unknown. Before I wished to know their designs, their methods, their thoughts; now I desire no longer, because I feel that there is a force which I share with them.

Yet I could not argue with a doubting spirit; I could not reassure an anxious heart. I could only tell one who was sadly exploring dogma and doctrine, that he was seeking the living among the dead. I can turn to God as to a friend close at my shoulder; but He so far transcends my thoughts that I could predicate nothing of Him but love and perfect understanding.

It may be, when I come again to die, that this will all be withdrawn from me, as all things, except a mere consciousness of failing life, were withdrawn from me before; but I shall feel, I know, that I am but as one shut for a space into a darkened room, knowing that outside the sunlight falls on field and tree. . . .

I walked this afternoon, just at sunset, alone, along a little lane near the house, which has become very familiar to me of late, and is haunted by many beautiful and grateful memories. I was very happy in the consciousness of recovered strength, and yet there was a sadness of farewell



in my mind, of farewell to a strange and solemn period of my life, which, in spite of gloom and even fear, has been somehow filled with a great happiness—the happiness of growing nearer, I think, to the heart of the world.

The lane at one point dips sharply down out of a little wood, and commands a wide view over flat, rich water-meadows, with a slow full stream moving softly among hazels and alders. The sun had just set, and the sky was suffused with a deep orange glow, that seemed to burn and smoulder with a calm and secret fire, struggling with dim smoky vapours on the rim of the world. The colour was dying fast out of the fields, but I could see the dusky green of the pastures among the lines of trees, which held up their leafless, intricate boughs against the western glow, and the pale spaces of stubble on the low hills which rose wooded from the plain. The stream gleamed wan between its dark banks, in pools and reedy elbows. The whole scene was charged to the brim with a peace that was not calm or tranquil, but ardent and intense, as though thrilled with an eager and secret apprehension of joy.

Just at that moment over the stream sailed a great heron, with curved wings, black against the

sky, dipping and sinking with a deliberate ~~pose~~ to his sleeping-place.

So would I that my soul might fall, not hurriedly or timorously, but with a glad and contented tranquillity, to the shining waters of death; to rest, while all is dark, until the dawn of that other morning, sleeping quietly, or if in waking peace, hearing nothing but the whisper of the night-wind over the quiet grasses, or the slow and murmurous lapse of the stream, moving liquidly downward beside its dark banks.

God rests, but ceases not. Through day and night alike beats the vast heart, pulsing in its secret cell. Through me, too, throbs that vital tide. What pain, what silence shall ever avail to bind that mighty impulse, or make inanimate whatever once has breathed and loved?

THE END







